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THE REGENT'S DAUGHTER.



THE WORKS OF
ALEXANDRE DUMAS

*The
Regent's Daughter
The Black Tulip*



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THE REGENT'S DAUGHTER.

CHAPTER I.

AN ABBESS OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

ON the 8th of February, 1719, a carriage, bearing the fleur-de-lis of France, with the motto of Orléans, preceded by two outriders and a page, entered the porch of the Abbey of Chelles, precisely as the clock struck ten, and, the door having been quickly opened, its two occupants stepped out.

The first was a man of from forty-five to forty-six years of age, short, and rather stout, with a high colour, easy in his movements, and displaying in every gesture a certain air of high breeding and command.

The second, who followed slowly, was short, and remarkably thin. His face, though not precisely ugly, was very disagreeable, although bearing the evidences of a keen intellect. He seemed to feel the cold, and followed his companion, wrapped up in an ample cloak.

The first of the two made his way up the staircase with the air of a man well acquainted with the locality. Passing through a large ante-chamber containing several nuns, who bowed to the ground as he passed, he ran rather than walked to a reception-room, which, it must be confessed, bore but little trace of that austerity which is ordinarily ascribed to the interior of a cloister.

The other, who followed leisurely, was saluted almost as humbly by the nuns.

"And now," said the first, "wait here and warm yourself while I go to her, and in ten minutes I will make an end of all these abuses you mention: if she deny, and I want proof, I will call you."

"Ten minutes, monseigneur," replied the man in the cloak; "in two hours your highness will not have even broached the subject of your visit. Oh! the Abbess de Chelles is a clever woman!"

So saying, he stretched himself out in an easy chair, which he had drawn near the fire, and rested his thin legs on the fender.

"Yes, yes," replied he who had been addressed as "your highness;" "I know, and if I could forget it, you take care to remind me of it often enough. Why did you bring me here to-day through all this wind and snow?"

"Because you would not come yesterday, monseigneur."

"Yesterday, it was impossible; I had an appointment with Lord Stair at five o'clock."

"In a house in the Rue des Bons Enfants. My lord does not live any longer, then, at the English embassy?"

"Abbé, I had forbidden you to follow me."

"Monseigneur, it is my duty to disobey you."

"Well then, disobey; but let me tell stories at my pleasure, without your having the impertinence to show me that you know it, just for the sake of proving the efficiency of your police."

"Monseigneur may rest easy in future, — I will believe anything!"

"I will not promise as much in return, abbé, for here I think you have made a mistake."

"Monseigneur, I know what I said, and I repeat it."

"But look! no noise, no light, perfect quiet, your account is incorrect: it is evident that we are late."

"Yesterday, monseigneur, where you stand there was an orchestra of fifty musicians; there, where that young sister kneels so devoutly, was a buffet: what was upon it I cannot tell, but I know it was there, and in the gallery on the

left, where a modest supper of lentils and cream cheese is now preparing for the holy sisters, were two hundred people, drinking, dancing, and making — ”

“ Well, making what ? ”

“ Making love, monseigneur. ”

“ Diable ! are you sure of this ? ”

“ Rather more sure than if I had seen it, and that is why you do well in coming to-day, and would have done better in coming yesterday. This sort of life does not become an abbess, monseigneur. ”

“ No, it is only fit for an abbé. Ha ! ”

“ I am a politician, monseigneur. ”

“ Well, my daughter is a political abbess, that is all. ”

“ Oh, let it be so, if it suit you, monseigneur ; I am not so particular in point of morals, you know. To-morrow there will be another song or two out, but what does that matter ? ”

“ Well, well, wait for me, and I will go and scold. ”

“ Take my word for it, monseigneur, if you wish to scold properly you had better do it here, before me ; if you fail in memory or arguments, sign to me, and I will come to the rescue. ”

“ Yes, yes, you are right, ” said the person who had undertaken to redress wrongs, and in whom we hope the reader has recognised Philippe d’Orléans. “ Yes, this scandal must be quieted a little, at any rate : the abbess must not receive more than twice a week. There must be none of these dances and assemblies, and the cloisters must be re-established. Mademoiselle d’Orléans passed from gaiety to a religious life ; she left the Palais Royal for Chelles in spite of all I could do to prevent her ; now, for five days in the week she must be the abbess, and that will leave her two to play the great lady. ”

“ Ah, monseigneur, you are beginning to see the thing in its true light. ”

“ Is not this what you wish ? ”

“ It is what is necessary. It seems to me that an abbess

who has thirty valets, fifteen footmen, ten cooks, eight grooms, and a mute, — who fences, plays the horn and the violoncello, — who is a surgeon and a hair-dresser, — who shoots and makes fireworks, — cannot be very dull."

"Has not my daughter been told of my arrival?" said the duke to an old nun who crossed the room with a bunch of keys in her hand; "I wish to know whether I shall go to her, or whether she is coming to me."

"Madame is coming, monseigneur," replied the sister, respectfully.

"It is well," murmured the regent, somewhat impatiently.

"Monseigneur, remember the parable of Jesus driving out the money-changers from the temple. You know it, or ought to know it, for I taught it you when I was your preceptor. Now, drive out these musicians, these Pharisees, these comedians and anatomists; three only of each profession will make a nice escort for our return."

"Do not fear, I am in a preaching vein."

"Then," replied Dubois, rising, "that is most fortunate, for here she is."

At this moment a door leading to the interior of the convent was opened, and the person so impatiently expected appeared.

Let us explain who was this worthy person who had succeeded, by repeated follies, in rousing the anger of Philippe d'Orléans, the most indulgent man and father in France.

Mademoiselle de Chartres, Louise-Adélaïde d'Orléans, was the second and prettiest of the regent's daughters. She had a beautiful complexion, fine eyes, a good figure, and well-shaped hands. Her teeth were splendid, and her grandmother, the princess palatine, compared them to a string of pearls in a coral casket. She danced well, sang better, and played at sight. She had learned of Cauchereau, one of the first artists at the opera, with whom she had made much more progress than is common with ladies, and especially with princesses. It is true that she was

most assiduous; the secret of that assiduity will be shortly revealed.

All her tastes were masculine. She appeared to have changed sex with her brother Louis. She loved dogs and horses; amused herself with pistols and foils, but cared little for any feminine occupations.

Her chief predilection, however, was for music; she seldom missed a night at the opera when her master Cauchereau performed; and once, when he surpassed himself in an air, she exclaimed, "Bravo, bravo, my dear Cauchereau!" in a voice audible to the whole house.

The Duchesse d'Orléans judged that the exclamation was somewhat indiscreet for a princess of the blood, and decided that Mademoiselle Chartres knew enough of music. Cauchereau was well paid, and desired not to return to the Palais Royal. The duchess also begged her daughter to spend a fortnight at the convent of Chelles, the abbess of which, a sister of Maréchal de Villars, was a friend of hers.

It was doubtless during this retreat that mademoiselle—who did everything by fits and starts—resolved to renounce the world. Towards the end of the holy week of 1718, she asked and obtained her father's permission to spend Easter at Chelles; but at the end of that time, instead of returning to the Palais, she expressed a wish to remain as a nun.

The duke tried to oppose this, but Mademoiselle de Chartres was obstinate, and on the 23d of April she took the vows. Then the duke treated with Mademoiselle de Villars for the abbey, and, on the promise of twelve thousand francs, Mademoiselle de Chartres was named abbess in her stead, and she had occupied the post about a year.

This, then, was the Abbess of Chelles, who appeared before her father, not surrounded by an elegant and profane court, but followed by six nuns dressed in black and holding torches. There was no sign of frivolity or of pleasure; nothing but the most sombre apparel and the most severe aspect.

The regent, however, suspected that he had been kept waiting while all this was preparing.

"I do not like hypocrisy," said he, sharply, "and can forgive vices which are not hidden under the garb of virtues. All these lights, madame, are doubtless the remains of yesterday's illumination. Are all your flowers so faded, and all your guests so fatigued, that you cannot show me a single bouquet nor a single dancer?"

"Monsieur," said the abbess, in a grave tone, "this is not the place for fêtes and amusements."

"Yes," answered the regent, "I see that, if you feasted yesterday, you fast to-day."

"Did you come here, monsieur, to catechise? At least what you see should reply to any accusations against me."

"I came to tell you, madame," replied the regent, annoyed at being supposed to have been duped, "that the life you lead displeases me; your conduct yesterday was unbecoming an abbess; your austerities to-day are unbecoming a princess of the blood: decide, once for all, between the nun and the court lady. People begin to speak ill of you, and I have enemies enough of my own without your saddling me with others from the depth of your convent."

"Alas, monsieur, in giving entertainments, balls, and concerts, which have been quoted as the best in Paris, I have neither pleased those enemies, nor you, nor myself. Yesterday was my last interview with the world; this morning I have taken leave of it for ever; and to-day, while still ignorant of your visit, I had adopted a determination from which I will never depart."

"And what is it?" asked the regent, suspecting that this was only a new specimen of his daughter's ordinary follies.

"Come to this window and look out," said the abbess.

The regent, in compliance with the invitation, approached the window, and saw a large fire blazing in the middle of the courtyard. Dubois — who was as curious as if he had really been an abbé — slipped up beside him.

Several people were rapidly passing and repassing before

the fire, and throwing various singular-shaped objects into the flames.

"But what is that?" asked the regent of Dubois, who seemed as much surprised as himself.

"That which is burning now?" asked the abbé.

"Yes," replied the regent.

"Ma foi, monseigneur, it looks to me very much like a violoncello."

"It is mine," said the abbess, "an excellent violoncello by Valeri."

"And you are burning it!" exclaimed the duke.

"All instruments are sources of perdition," said the abbess, in a tone which betrayed the most profound remorse.

"Eh! but here is a harpsichord," interrupted the duke.

"My harpsichord, monsieur; it was so perfect that it enticed me towards earthly things: I condemned it this morning."

"And what are those chests of papers with which they are feeding the fire?" asked Dubois, whom the spectacle seemed to interest intently.

"My music, which I am having burned."

"Your music?" demanded the regent.

"Yes, and even yours," answered the abbess; "look carefully, and you will see your opera of 'Panthée' follow in its turn. You will understand that, my resolution once taken, its execution was necessarily general."

"Well, madame, this time you are really mad! To light the fire with music, and then feed it with bass-voils and harpsichords, is really a little too luxurious."

"I am doing penance, monsieur."

"Hum, say rather that you are refitting your house, and that this is an excuse for buying new furniture, since you are doubtless tired of the old."

"No, monseigneur, it is no such thing."

"Well, then, what is it? Tell me frankly."

"In truth, I am weary of amusing myself, and indeed I intend to act differently."

"And what are you going to do?"

"I am going with my nuns to visit my tomb."

"Diable, monseigneur!" exclaimed the abbé, "her wits are gone at last."

"It will be truly edifying, will it not, monsieur?" continued the abbess, gravely.

"Indeed," answered the regent, "if you really do this, I doubt not but people will laugh at it twice as much as they did at your suppers."

"Will you accompany me, messieurs?" continued the abbess; "I am going to spend a few minutes in my coffin: it is a fancy I have had a long time."

"You will have plenty of time for that," said the regent; "moreover, you have not even invented this amusement; for Charles the Fifth, who became a monk as you became a nun, without exactly knowing why, thought of it before you."

"Then you will not go with me, monsieur?" said the abbess.

"I," answered the duke, who had not the least sympathy with sombre ideas, "I go to see tombs! I go to hear the *De Profundis*! No, *pardieu*! and the only thing which consoles me for not being able to escape them some day is, that I shall neither see the one nor the other."

"Ah, monsieur," answered the abbess, in a scandalised tone, "you do not, then, believe in the immortality of the soul?"

"I believe that you are raving mad. Confound this abbé, who promises me a feast, and brings me to a funeral."

"By my faith, monseigneur," said Dubois, "I think I prefer the extravagance of yesterday; it was more attractive."

The abbess bowed, and made a few steps towards the door. The duke and Dubois remained staring at each other, uncertain whether to laugh or to cry.

"One word more," said the duke: "are you decided this time, or is it not some fever which you have caught from

your confessor? If it be real, I have nothing to say; but if it be a fever, I desire that they cure you of it. I have Morceau and Chirac, whom I pay for attending on me and mine."

"Monseigneur," answered the abbess, "you forget that I know sufficient of medicine to undertake my own cure if I were ill. I can, therefore, assure you that I am not. I am a Jansenist; that is all."

"Ah," cried the duke, "this is more of Père le Doux's work, that execrable Benedictine! At least I know a treatment which will cure him."

"What is that?" asked the abbess.

"The Bastille."

And he went out in a rage, followed by Dubois, who was laughing heartily.

"You see," said the regent, after a long silence, and when they were nearing Paris, "I preached with a good grace; it seems it was I who needed the sermon."

"Well, you are a happy father, that is all; I compliment you on your younger daughter, Mademoiselle de Chartres. Unluckily your elder daughter, the Duchesse de Berry —"

"Oh, do not talk of her; she is my ulcer, particularly when I am in a bad temper."

"Well?"

"I have a great mind to make use of it by finishing with her at one blow."

"She is at the Luxembourg?"

"I believe so."

"Let us go to the Luxembourg, monseigneur."

"You go with me?"

"I shall not leave you to-night."

"Well, drive to the Luxembourg."

CHAPTER II.

DECIDEDLY THE FAMILY BEGINS TO SETTLE DOWN.

WHATEVER the regent might say, the Duchesse de Berry was his favourite daughter. At seven years of age she had been seized with a disease which all the doctors declared to be fatal, and when they had abandoned her, her father, who had studied medicine, took her in hand himself, and succeeded in saving her.

From that time the regent's affection for his daughter became almost a weakness. He allowed the haughty and self-willed child the most perfect liberty; her education was neglected, but this did not prevent Louis XIV. from choosing her as a wife for his grandson the Duc de Berry.

It is well known how death at once struck a triple blow at the royal posterity, and within a few years carried off the Dauphin, the Duc and Duchesse de Bourgogne, and the Duc de Berry.

Left a widow at twenty years of age, loving her father almost as tenderly as he loved her, and having to choose between the society of Versailles and that of the Palais Royal, the Duchesse de Berry, young, beautiful, and fond of pleasure, had quickly decided. She took part in all the fêtes, the pleasures and follies of her father.

The Duc d'Orléans, in his increasing fondness for his daughter, who already had six hundred thousand francs a year, allowed her four hundred thousand more from his private fortune. He gave up the Luxembourg to her, gave her a body-guard, and at length, to the scandal of those who advocated the old forms of etiquette, he merely shrugged his shoulders when the Duchesse de Berry passed through

Paris preceded by cymbals and trumpets, and only laughed when she received the Venetian ambassador on a throne, raised on three steps, which nearly embroiled France with the republic of Venice.

About this time the Duchesse de Berry took a fancy to fall in love with the Chevalier de Riom.

The Chevalier de Riom was a nephew or grand-nephew of the Duc de Lauzun, who came to Paris in 1715 to seek his fortune, and found it at the Luxembourg. Introduced to the princess by Madame de Mouchy, he soon established the same influence over her as his uncle, the Duc de Lauzun, had exercised over La Grande Mademoiselle fifty years before, and was soon established as her lover, supplanting Lahaie, who was sent on an embassy to Denmark.

The duchess had the singular moderation of never having had more than two lovers: Lahaie, whom she had never avowed, and Riom, whom she proclaimed aloud.

This was not the true cause of the malice with which the princess was pursued; it arose rather from the previous offences of her passage through Paris, the reception of the ambassadors, her body-guard, and her assumptions.

The duke himself was indignant at Riom's influence over his daughter. Riom had been brought up by the Duc de Lauzun, who in the morning had crushed the hand of the Princesse de Monaco with the heel of the boot which, in the evening, he made the daughter of Gaston d'Orléans pull off, and who had given his nephew the following instruction, which Riom had fully carried out.

"The daughters of France," said he, "must be treated with a high hand;" and Riom, trusting to his uncle's experience, had so well schooled the Duchesse de Berry that she scarcely dared to give a fête without his permission.

The duke took as strong a dislike to Riom as his careless character allowed him to take to any one, and, under pretext of serving the duchess, had given him a regiment, then the government of Cognac, then the order to retire to

his government, which almost made his favours look like disfavours and disgrace.

The duchess was not deceived; she went to her father, begged, prayed, and scolded, but in vain; and she went away threatening the duke with her anger, and declaring that Riom should not go.

The duke's only reply was to repeat his orders for Riom's departure the next day, and Riom had respectfully promised to obey.

The same day, which was the one preceding that on which our story opens, Riom had ostensibly set out, and Dubois himself had told the duke that he had left for Cognac at nine o'clock.

Meanwhile the duke had not again seen his daughter; thus, when he spoke of going to finish with her, it was rather a pardon than a quarrel that he went to seek.

Dubois had not been duped by this pretended resolution; but Riom was gone, and that was all he wanted; he hoped to slip in some new personage who would efface all memory of Riom, who was to be sent to join the Maréchal de Berwick in Spain.

The carriage stopped before the Luxembourg, which was lighted as usual.

The duke ascended the steps with his usual celerity. Dubois remained in a corner of the carriage. Presently the duke appeared at the door with a disappointed air.

"Ah, monseigneur," said Dubois, "are you refused admittance?"

"No, the duchess is not here."

"Where, then, — at the Carmelites?"

"No, at Meudon."

"At Meudon, in February, and in such weather; what can she be doing there?"

"It is easy to know."

"How?"

"Let us go to Meudon."

"To Meudon!" said the regent, jumping into the

carriage. "I allow you five-and-twenty minutes to get there."

"I would humbly beg to remind monseigneur," said the coachman, "that the horses have already gone ten leagues."

"Kill them, but be at Meudon in five-and-twenty minutes."

There was no reply to be made to such an order; the coachman whipped his horses, and the noble animals set out at as brisk a pace as if they had just left the stable.

Throughout the drive Dubois was silent and the regent thoughtful; there was nothing on the route to arrest the attention of either, and they arrived at Meudon full of contradictory reflections.

This time both alighted; Dubois, thinking the interview might be long, was anxious to find a more comfortable waiting-place than a carriage.

At the door they found a Swiss in full livery — he stopped them — the duke made himself known.

"Pardon," said the Swiss, "I did not know that monseigneur was expected."

"Expected or not, I am here; send word to the princess."

"Monseigneur is to be at the ceremony?" asked the Swiss, who seemed embarrassed.

"Yes, of course," put in Dubois, stopping the duke, who was about to ask what ceremony; "and I also."

"Then shall I lead monseigneur at once to the chapel?"

"To the chapel?" asked the duke.

"Yes; for the ceremony is already commenced."

"Ah, Dubois," said the duke, "is she also going to take the veil?"

"Monseigneur," said Dubois, "I should rather say she is going to be married."

"Pardieu!" exclaimed the regent, "that would crown all;" and he darted towards the staircase, followed by Dubois.

"Does not monseigneur wish me to guide him?" asked the Swiss.

"It is needless," cried the regent; "I know the way."

Indeed, with an agility surprising in so corpulent a man, the regent darted through the rooms and corridors, and arrived at the door of the chapel, which appeared to be closed, but yielded to the first touch.

Dubois was right.

Riom, who had returned secretly, was on his knees with the princess before the private chaplain of the Luxembourg, while M. de Pons, Riom's relative, and the Marquis de la Rochefoucauld, captain of the princess's guard, held the canopy over their heads; Messieurs de Mouchy and de Lauzun stood, one by the duchess and the other by Riom.

"Certainly fortune is against us, monseigneur," said Dubois; "we are five minutes too late."

"Mordieu!" cried the duke, exasperated, "we will see."

"Chut," said Dubois; "I cannot permit sacrilege. If it were any use, I do not say; but this would be mere folly."

"Are they married, then?" asked the duke, drawing back.

"So much married, monseigneur, that the devil himself cannot unmarry them, without the assistance of the Pope."

"I will write to Rome!"

"Take care, monseigneur; do not waste your influence; you will want it all to get me made a cardinal."

"But," exclaimed the regent, "such a marriage is intolerable."

"Mésalliances are in fashion," said Dubois; "there is nothing else talked of. Louis XIV. made a mésalliance in marrying Madame de Maintenon, to whom you pay a pension as his widow; La Grande Mademoiselle made a mésalliance in marrying the Duc de Lauzun; you did so in marrying Mademoiselle de Blois, so much so, indeed, that when you announced the marriage to your mother, the princess palatine, she replied by a blow. Did not I do the same when I married the daughter of a village schoolmaster? After such good examples, why should not your daughter do so in her turn?"

"Silence, demon," said the regent.

"Besides," continued Dubois, "the Duchesse de Berry's passion began to be talked about, and this will quiet the talk; for it will be known all through Paris to-morrow. Decidedly, monseigneur, your family begins to settle down."

The Duc d'Orléans uttered an oath, to which Dubois replied by a laugh, which Mephistopheles might have envied.

"Silence!" cried a Swiss, who did not know who it was that was making a noise, and did not wish the pious exhortation of the chaplain to be lost.

"Silence, monseigneur," repeated Dubois; "you are disturbing the ceremony."

"If we are not silent," replied the duke, "the next thing they will do will be to turn us out."

"Silence!" repeated the Swiss, striking the flag-stone with his halberd, while the Duchesse de Berry sent M. de Mouchy to learn who was causing the disturbance.

M. de Mouchy obeyed the orders of the duchess, and perceiving two persons who appeared to be concealing themselves in the shade, he approached them.

"Who is making this noise?" said he; "and who gave you permission to enter this chapel?"

"One who has a great mind to send you all out by the window," replied the regent, "but who will content himself at present with begging you to order M. de Riom to set out at once for Cognac, and to intimate to the Duchesse de Berry that she had better absent herself from the Palais Royal."

The regent went out, signing to Dubois to follow; and, leaving M. de Mouchy bewildered at his appearance, returned to the Palais Royal.

That evening the regent wrote a letter, and ringing for a valet,—

"Take care that this letter is despatched by an express courier to-morrow morning, and is delivered only to the person to whom it is addressed."

That person was Madame Ursule, Superior of the Ursuline Convent at Clisson.

CHAPTER III.

WHAT PASSED THREE NIGHTS LATER AT EIGHT HUNDRED
LEAGUES FROM THE PALAIS ROYAL.

THREE nights after that on which we have seen the regent, first at Chelles and then at Meudon, a scene passed in the environs of Nantes which cannot be omitted in this history; we will therefore exercise our privilege of transporting the reader to that place.

On the road to Clisson, two or three miles from Nantes, near the convent known as the residence of Abelard, was a large dark house, surrounded by thick stunted trees; hedges everywhere surrounded the enclosure outside the walls, hedges impervious to the sight, and only interrupted by a wicket gate.

This gate led into a garden, at the end of which was a wall, having a small, massive, and closed door. From a distance this grave and dismal residence appeared like a prison; it was, however, a convent, full of young Augustines, subject to a rule lenient as compared with provincial customs, but rigid as compared with those of Paris.

The house was inaccessible on three sides, but the fourth, which did not face the road, abutted on a large sheet of water; and ten feet above its surface were the windows of the refectory.

This little lake was carefully guarded, and was surrounded by high wooden palisades. A single iron gate opened into it, and at the same time gave a passage to the waters of a small rivulet which fed the lake, and the water had egress at the opposite end.

In the summer, a small boat belonging to the garden was seen on the water, and was used for fishing.

Sometimes, also, in summer, on dark nights, the river gate was mysteriously opened, and a man wrapped in a large brown cloak silently dropped into the little boat, which appeared to detach itself from its fastenings, then glided quietly along, and stopped under one of the barred windows of the refectory.

Soon a sound was heard imitating the croaking of a frog or the cry of the owl so common there, and then a young girl would appear at the window, and pass her head through the opening between the bars, which were, however, too high for the man to reach. A low and tender conversation was then carried on, and at length, after a different hour and a different signal had been agreed upon for their next interview, they separated, the boat disappeared, the gate shut gently, and the young girl closed the window with a sigh.

But now it was the month of February, and in the terrible winter of 1719. The trees were powdered with hoar frost, and it was at this time impossible to glide quietly along in the little boat, for the lake was covered with ice. And yet, in this biting cold, in this dark, starless night, a cavalier ventured alone into the open country, and along a cross-road which led to Clisson. He threw the reins on the neck of his horse, which proceeded at a slow and careful pace.

Soon, however, in spite of his instinctive precaution, the poor animal, which had no light to guide him, struck against a stone and nearly fell. The rider soon perceived that his horse was lamed, and, on seeing a trail of blood upon the snow, discovered that it was wounded.

The young man appeared seriously annoyed at the accident, and while deliberating what course to take, he heard a sound of horses' feet on the same road; and, feeling sure that if they were pursuing him he could not escape them, he remounted his horse, drew aside behind some

fallen trees, put his sword under his arm, drew out a pistol, and waited.

The cavalcade soon appeared; they were four in number, and rode silently along, passing the group of trees which hid the cavalier, when suddenly they stopped. One who appeared the chief alighted, took out a dark lantern, and examined the road.

As they could not see far, they returned some steps, and, by the light of their lantern, perceived the cavalier.

The sound of cocking pistols was now heard.

"Hola!" said the cavalier with the wounded horse, taking the initiative; "who are you, and what do you want?"

"It is he," murmured two or three voices.

The man with the lantern advanced towards the cavalier.

"Advance once step farther and you are a dead man," said the cavalier. "Declare your name at once, that I may know with whom I have to deal."

"Shoot no one, Gaston de Chanlay," replied the man with the lantern, calmly, "and put up your pistols."

"Ah! it is the Marquis de Pontcalec."

"Yes, it is I."

"And what do you come here for, may I ask?"

"To demand some explanation of your conduct. Approach and reply, if you please."

"The invitation is singular, marquis. If you wish for an answer, could you not ask it in other terms?"

"Approach, Gaston," said another voice; "we really wish to speak with you."

"À la bonne heure," said Chanlay, "I recognise you there, Montlouis; but I confess I am not accustomed to M. de Pontcalec's manner of proceeding."

"My manners are those of a frank and open Breton, monsieur," replied the marquis, "of one who has nothing to hide from his friends, and is willing to be questioned as freely as he questions others."

"I join Montlouis," said another voice, "in begging

Gaston to explain amicably. Surely it is not our interest to quarrel amongst ourselves."

"Thanks, Du Couëdic," said De Chanlay, "I am of the same opinion; so here I am." And sheathing his sword at these words, the young man issued from his retreat and approached the group.

"M. de Tahouet," said Pontcalec, in the tone of a man who has a right to issue commands, "watch that no one approaches."

M. de Tahouet obeyed, and rode round in a circle, keeping both eyes and ears open.

"And now," said the marquis, "let us put out our lantern, since we have found our man."

"Messieurs," said De Chanlay, "all this seems to me somewhat strange. It appears that you were following me, that you were seeking for me; now you have found me, and may put out your lantern. What does it mean? If it is a joke, I confess I think both time and place ill chosen."

"No, monsieur," replied Pontcalec, in his hard, dry voice, "it is not a joke; it is an interrogatory."

"An interrogatory?" said De Chanlay, frowning.

"An explanation, rather," said Montlouis.

"Interrogatory or explanation, it matters not," said Pontcalec; "the thing is too serious to argue about words. M. de Chanlay, I repeat, reply to our questions."

"You speak roughly, Marquis de Pontcalec," replied the chevalier.

"If I command, it is because I have the right to do so. Am I, or am I not, your chief?"

"Certainly you are; but that is no reason for forgetting the consideration which one gentleman owes to another."

"M. de Chanlay, all these objections seem to me like shuffling. You have sworn to obey,—do so now."

"I swore to obey," replied the chevalier, "but not as a servant."

"You swore to obey as a slave. Obey, then, or submit to the consequences of your disobedience!"

"Monsieur le Marquis !"

"My dear Gaston," cried Montlouis, "speak, I beg, as soon as possible : by a word you can remove all suspicion."

"Suspicion !" cried Gaston, pale with anger ; "am I suspected, then ?"

"Certainly you are," said Pontcalec, with his ordinary roughness. "Do you think if we did not suspect you we should amuse ourselves by following you on such a night as this ?"

"Oh, that is quite another matter !" said Gaston, coldly ; "tell me your suspicions. I listen."

"Chevalier, remember the facts ; we four were conspiring together, and we did not seek your aid ; you offered it, saying that, besides being willing to aid in the public good, you had a private revenge to serve in this. Am I not right ?"

"You are."

"We received you, — welcomed you as a friend, as a brother ; we told you all our hopes, all our plans ; nay, more, you were elected, by chance, the one to strike the glorious blow. Each one of us offered to take your part, but you refused. Is it not so ?"

"You have spoken the strictest truth, marquis."

"This very morning we drew the lots ; this evening you should be on the road to Paris. Instead of that, where do we find you ? on the road to Clisson, where are lodged the mortal enemies of Breton independence, where lives your sworn foe, the Maréchal de Montesquieu."

"Ah ! monsieur," said Gaston, scornfully.

"Reply by open words, and not by sneers : reply, M. de Chanlay, and quickly."

"Reply, Gaston," said Du Couëdic and Montlouis, imploringly.

"And to what am I to reply ?"

"You are to account for your frequent absence during the last two months, — for the mystery which surrounds you, — for refusing, as you do, once or twice weekly, to

join our nightly meetings. We confess, Gaston, all this has made us uneasy ; by a word you can reassure us."

"You see, monsieur, that you are proved guilty by hiding, instead of pursuing your course."

"I did not pursue my course, because my horse was wounded ; you may see the stains of blood upon the road."

"But why did you hide ?"

"Because I wished to know first who was pursuing me. Have I not the fear of being arrested, as well as yourselves ?"

"And where are you going ?"

"If you had followed my steps as you have done hitherto, you would have found that my path did not lead to Clisson."

"Nor to Paris."

"I beg," said De Chanlay, "that you will trust me, and respect my secret, — a secret in which not only my own honour, but that of another, is concerned. You do not know — perhaps it may be exaggerated — how extreme is my delicacy on this point."

"Then it is a love secret," said Montlouis.

"Yes, and the secret of a first love," replied Gaston.

"All evasions," cried Pontcalec.

"Marquis!" said Gaston, haughtily.

"This is not saying enough, my friend," replied Du Couëdic. "How can we believe that you are going to a rendezvous in such weather, and that this rendezvous is not at Clisson, — where, except the Augustine Convent, there is not a single house for two miles around."

"M. de Chanlay," said the Marquis de Pontcalec, in an agitated voice, "you swore to obey me as your chief, and to devote soul and body to our holy cause. Monsieur, our undertaking is serious, — our property, our liberties, our lives and our honour are at stake. Will you reply clearly and freely to the questions which I put to you in the name of all, so as to remove all doubts? If not, Gaston de Chanlay, by virtue of that right which you gave me, of

your own free will, over your life, — if not, I declare on my honour I will blow your brains out with my own hand!"

A solemn silence followed these words; not one voice was raised to defend Gaston; he looked at each one in turn, and each one turned away from him.

"Marquis," said the chevalier at length, in a tone of deep feeling, "not only do you insult me by suspicions, but you grieve me by saying that I can only remove those suspicions by declaring my secret. Stay," added he, drawing a pocket-book from his coat, and hastily pencilling a few words on a leaf which he tore out; "stay, here is the secret you wish to know; I hold it in one hand, and in the other I hold a loaded pistol. Will you make me reparation for the insult you have offered me? or, in my turn, I give you my word as a gentleman that I will blow my brains out. When I am dead, open my hand and read this paper; you will then see if I deserved your suspicions."

And Gaston held the pistol to his head with the calm resolution which showed that he would keep his word.

"Gaston! Gaston!" cried Montlouis, while Du Couëdic held his arm; "stop, in Heaven's name! Marquis, he would do as he said; pardon him, and he will tell us all. Is it not so, Gaston? You will not have a secret from your brothers, who beg you, in the names of their wives and children, to tell it them."

"Certainly," said the marquis, "I not only pardon but love him; he knows it well. Let him but prove his innocence, and I will make him every reparation; but, before that, nothing; he is young, and alone in the world. He has not, like us, wives and children, whose happiness and whose fortune he is risking; he stakes only his own life, and he holds that as cheaply as is usual at twenty years of age; but with his life he risks ours; and yet let him say but one word showing a justification, and I will be the first to open my arms to him."

"Well, marquis," said Gaston, after a few moments' silence, "follow me, and you shall be satisfied."

"And we?" asked Montlouis and Du Couëdic.

"Come, also, you are all gentlemen; I risk no more in confiding my secret to all than to one."

The marquis called Tahouet, who had kept good watch, and now rejoined the group, and followed without asking what had passed.

All five went on but slowly, for Gaston's horse was lame; the chevalier guided them towards the convent, then to the little rivulet, and at ten paces from the iron gate he stopped.

"It is here," said he.

"Here?"

"At the convent?"

"Yes, my friends; there is here at this moment a young girl whom I have loved since I saw her a year ago in the procession at the Fête Dieu at Nantes; she observed me also. I followed her, and sent her a letter."

"But how do you see her?" asked the marquis.

"A hundred louis won the gardener over to my interest; he has given me a key to this gate; in the summer I come in a boat to the convent wall; ten feet above the water is a window, where she awaits me. If it were lighter, you could see it from this spot; and, in spite of the darkness, I see it now."

"Yes, I understand how you manage in summer; but you cannot use the boat now."

"True, but, instead, there is a coating of ice on which I shall go this evening; perhaps it will break and engulf me; so much the better, for then, I hope, your suspicions would die with me."

"You have taken a load from my breast," said Montlouis. "Ah! my poor Gaston, how happy you make me! for, remember, Du Couëdic and I answered for you."

"Chevalier," said the marquis, "pardon and embrace us."

"Willingly, marquis; but you have destroyed a portion of my happiness."

"How so?"

"I wished my love to have been known to no one. I have so much need of strength and courage! Am I not to leave her to-night for ever?"

"Who knows, chevalier? You look gloomily at the future."

"I know what I am saying, Montlouis."

"If you succeed — and with your courage and *sang-froid* you ought to succeed — France is free: then she will owe her liberty to you, and you will be master of your own fate."

"Ah! marquis, if I succeed, it will be for you; my own fate is fixed."

"Courage, chevalier; meanwhile, let us see how you manage these love affairs."

"Still mistrust, marquis?"

"Still, my dear Gaston, I mistrust myself. And naturally enough; after being named your chief, all the responsibility rests on me, and I must watch over you all."

"At least, marquis, I am as anxious to reach the foot of that wall as you can be to see me, so I shall not keep you waiting long."

Gaston tied his horse to a tree; by means of a plank thrown across, he passed the stream, opened the gate, and then, following the palisades so as to get away from the stream, he stepped upon the ice, which cracked under his feet.

"In Heaven's name," cried Montlouis, "be prudent."

"Look, marquis," said Gaston.

"I believe you; I believe you, Gaston."

"You give me fresh courage," replied the chevalier.

"And now, Gaston, one word more. When shall you leave?"

"To-morrow, at this time, marquis, I shall probably be thirty leagues on the way to Paris."

"Come back and let us embrace, and say adieu."

"With pleasure."

Gaston retraced his steps, and was embraced cordially by each of the chevaliers, who did not turn away till they saw that he had arrived safely at the end of his perilous journey.

CHAPTER IV.

SHOWING HOW CHANCE ARRANGES SOME MATTERS BETTER
THAN PROVIDENCE.

IN spite of the cracking of the ice, Gaston pursued his way boldly, and perceived, with a beating heart, that the winter rains had raised the waters of the little lake, so that he might possibly be able to reach the window.

He was not mistaken; on giving the signal, the window was opened, then a head appeared nearly at the level of his own, and a hand touched his: it was the first time. Gaston seized it, and covered it with kisses.

"Gaston, you have come in spite of the cold, and on the ice; I told you in my letter not to do so."

"With your letter on my heart, *Hélène*, I think I can run no danger; but what have you to tell me? You have been crying!"

"Alas! since this morning I have done little else."

"Since this morning," said Gaston, with a sad smile, "that is strange; if I were not a man, I too should have cried since this morning."

"What do you say, Gaston?"

"Nothing, nothing; tell me, what are your griefs, *Hélène*?"

"Alas! you know I am not my own mistress. I am a poor orphan, brought up here, having no other world than the convent. I have never seen any one to whom I can give the names of father or mother — my mother I believe to be dead, and my father is absent; I depend upon an invisible power, revealed only to our superior. This morning the good mother sent for me, and announced, with tears in her eyes, that I was to leave."

"To leave the convent, Hélène?"

"Yes; my family reclaims me, Gaston."

"Your family? Alas! what new misfortune awaits us?"

"Yes, it is a misfortune, Gaston. Our good mother at first congratulated me, as if it were a pleasure; but I was happy here, and wished to remain till I became your wife. I am otherwise disposed of, but how?"

"And this order to remove you?"

"Admits of neither dispute nor delay. Alas! it seems that I belong to a powerful family, and that I am the daughter of some great nobleman. When the good mother told me I must leave, I burst into tears, and fell on my knees, and said I would not leave her; then, suspecting that I had some hidden motive, she pressed me, questioned me, and — forgive me, Gaston — I wanted to confide in some one. I felt the want of pity and consolation, and I told her all, — that we loved each other, — all except the manner in which we meet. I was afraid, if I told her that, that she would prevent my seeing you this last time to say adieu."

"But did you not tell, Hélène, what were my plans; that, bound to an association myself for six months, perhaps for a year, at the end of that time, the very day I should be free, my name, my fortune, my very life, were yours?"

"I told her, Gaston; and this is what makes me think I am the daughter of some powerful nobleman, for then Mother Ursula replied: 'You must forget the chevalier, my child; for who knows that your new family would consent to your marrying him?'"

"But do not I belong to one of the oldest families in Brittany? and, though I am not rich, my fortune is independent. Did you say this, Hélène?"

"Yes; I said to her, 'Gaston chose me, an orphan, without name and without fortune. I may be separated from him, but it would be cruel ingratitude to forget him, and I shall never do so.'"

"Hélène, you are an angel. And you cannot then imagine who are your parents, or to what you are destined?"

"No; it seems that it is a secret on which all my future happiness depends: only, Gaston, I fear they are high in station, for it almost appeared as if our superior spoke to me with deference."

"To you, Hélène?"

"Yes."

"So much the better," said Gaston, sighing.

"Do you rejoice at our separation, Gaston?"

"No, Hélène; but I rejoice that you should find a family when you are about to lose a friend."

"Lose a friend, Gaston! I have none but you; whom then should I lose?"

"At least, I must leave you for some time, Hélène."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that Fate has endeavoured to make our lots similar, and that you are not the only one who does not know what the morrow may bring forth."

"Gaston! Gaston! what does this strange language mean?"

"That I also am subject to a fatality which I must obey, — that I also am governed by an irresistible and superior power."

"You! oh heavens!"

"To a power which may condemn me to leave you in a week — in a fortnight — in a month; and not only to leave you, but to leave France."

"Ah, Gaston! what do you tell me?"

"What in my love, or rather in my egotism, I have dreaded to tell you before. I shut my eyes to this hour, and yet I knew that it must come; this morning they were opened. I must leave you, Hélène."

"But why? What have you undertaken? what will become of you?"

"Alas! Hélène, we each have our secret," said the

chevalier, sorrowfully; "I pray that yours may be less terrible than mine."

"Gaston!"

"Were you not the first to say that we must part, Hélène? Had not you first the courage to renounce me? Well; blessings on you for that courage, -- for I, Hélène, I had it not."

And at these last words the young man again pressed his lips to her hand, and Hélène could see that tears stood in his eyes.

"Oh, mon Dieu!" murmured she, "how have we deserved this misery?"

At this exclamation Gaston raised his head. "Come," said he, as if to himself, "courage! It is useless to struggle against these necessities; let us obey without a murmur, and perhaps our resignation may disarm our fate. Can I see you again?"

"I fear not, -- I leave to-morrow."

"And on what road?"

"To Paris."

"Good heavens!" cried Gaston; "and I also."

"You also, Gaston?"

"Yes, Hélène; we were mistaken, we need not part."

"Oh, Gaston! is it true?"

"Hélène, we had no right to accuse Providence; not only can we see each other on the journey, but at Paris we will not be separated. How do you travel?"

"In the convent carriage, with post horses and by short stages."

"Who goes with you?"

"A nun, who will return to the convent when she has delivered me over to those who await me."

"All is for the best, Hélène. I shall go on horseback, as a stranger, unknown to you; each evening I may speak to you, or, if I cannot do so, I shall at least see you. It will be but a half separation."

And the two lovers, with the buoyant hopes of youth,

after meeting with tears and sadness, parted with smiles and joyous confidence in the future. Gaston recrossed the frozen lake, and found, instead of his own wounded horse, that of Montlouis, and, thanks to this kindness, reached Nantes safely in less than three-quarters of an hour.

CHAPTER V.

THE JOURNEY.

THAT very night Gaston made his will, and deposited it with a notary at Nantes.

He left everything to Hélène de Chaverny; begged her, if he died, not to renounce the world, but to accept the career opening to her youth and beauty; but as he was the last of his family, he begged her, in memory of him, to call her first son Gaston.

He next went to see each of his friends, and once more told them that he believed the enterprise would be successful. Pontcalec gave him half a piece of gold and a letter, which he was to present to a certain Captain la Jonquière, their correspondent at Paris, who would put Gaston in communication with the important persons he went to seek. He then put all the ready money he had into a valise, and, accompanied only by an old servant named Owen, in whom he had great confidence, he set out from Nantes.

It was midday, a bright sun shone on the stream, and sparkled on the icicles which hung from the leafless trees, as Gaston made his way along the deserted road, looking in vain for anything resembling the convent carriage.

The servant appeared much more anxious to quicken their pace than Gaston himself did, for to him the journey was fraught with annoyances, and he was so anxious to arrive at that Paris of which he had heard such wonderful tales, that, had it been possible, he would willingly have added wings to their horses' feet.

Gaston, however, travelled slowly as far as Oudon, but the convent carriage proceeded more slowly still. At Oudon

he halted; he chose the Char Couronné, a house which had some windows overlooking the road, and which, moreover, was the best inn in the village.

While his dinner was preparing, Gaston, in spite of the cold, remained in the balcony; but in vain he looked for the carriage he so much wished to see.

Then he thought that perhaps Hélène had preceded him, and was already in the inn. He went at once to a window at the back, overlooking the courtyard, to inspect the carriages standing there.

His attention was arrested by seeing, not the carriage, but his servant, Owen, speaking earnestly to a man dressed in gray and wrapped in a sort of military cloak, who, after a short conversation, mounted his horse and rode off with the air of a man to whom speed is of the utmost importance, as Gaston heard his steps along the road to Paris.

At this moment the servant raised his eyes, and began busily brushing the snow from his boots and clothes.

Gaston signed to him to approach.

"Who were you talking with, Owen?"

"To a man, M. Gaston."

"Who is that man?"

"A traveller,—a soldier, who was asking his way."

"His way; to what place?"

"To Rennes."

"But you could not tell him, for you do not know this place."

"I asked the landlord, monsieur."

"Why could not he ask himself?"

"Because he had had a quarrel with him about the price of his dinner, and did not wish to speak to him again."

"Hum," said Gaston.

Nothing was more natural than this, yet Gaston became thoughtful; but he quickly threw off his suspicions, accusing himself of becoming timid at a time when he most needed courage; his brow remained clouded, however, for the carriage did not appear.

He thought at one moment that H  l  ne might have chosen another road in order to part from him without noise or quarrel, but he soon concluded that it was only some accident which delayed her; he sat down again to table, though he had finished his dinner, and when Owen appeared to clear away, "Some wine," said he. Owen had already removed a half empty bottle.

"Some wine?" repeated the servant in astonishment, for Gaston usually drank but little.

"Yes, some wine; is there anything surprising in that?"

"No, monsieur," replied Owen.

And he transmitted the order for a second bottle of wine to the waiter. Gaston poured out a glass, drank it, then a second.

Owen stared.

Then, thinking it both his duty and his interest to prevent his master's finishing the bottle, —

"Monsieur," said he, "I have heard that, if you are riding, it is bad to drink when it is very cold. You forget that we have a long way to go, and that it will be getting still colder, and if we wait much longer we shall get no post-horses. It is nearly three o'clock now, and at half-past four it will be dark."

This behaviour surprised Gaston.

"You are in a very great hurry, Owen," said he; "have you a rendezvous with the man who was asking his way of you?"

"Monsieur knows that to be impossible," replied Owen. "since he is going to Rennes, and we to Paris."

However, under the scrutinising gaze of his master, Owen turned red, when suddenly, at the sound of wheels, Gaston ran to the window. It was the dark carriage.

At this sight Gaston darted from the room.

It was then Owen's turn to run to the window to see what it was that had so much interested his master. He saw a green and black carriage stop, from which the driver

alighted, and opened the door; then he saw a young lady in a cloak go into the hotel, followed by an Augustine sister; the two ladies, announcing that they should only remain to dine, asked for a room.

But to reach this room they had to cross a public saloon, in which Gaston stood near the fireplace; a rapid but meaning glance was exchanged between him and Hélène, and, to Gaston's great satisfaction, he recognised in the driver of the carriage the convent gardener.

He let him pass, however, unnoticed, but, as he crossed the yard to go to the stable, followed him.

He accosted the gardener, who told him that he was to take the two ladies to Rambouillet, where Hélène would remain, and then he was to take back Sister Thérèse to Clisson.

Gaston, raising his eyes suddenly, saw Owen watching him, and this curiosity displeased him.

"What are you doing there?" asked he.

"Waiting for orders," said Owen.

"Do you know that fellow?" asked Gaston of the gardener.

"M. Owen, your servant? Of course I do; we are from the same place."

"So much the worse," murmured Gaston.

"Oh, Owen is an honest fellow."

"Never mind," said Gaston; "not a word of Hélène, I beg."

The gardener promised; and indeed it was his own interest to keep the secret, for had it been discovered that he had given Gaston the key, he would have lost his place.

After a hasty meal, the carriage was again ordered, and at the door Gaston met the ladies and handed them in. Chanlay was not quite unknown to the sister, so she thanked him graciously as he handed her in.

"Monsieur," said Owen, behind the chevalier, "our horses are ready."

"One more glass," said Gaston, "and I shall start."

To Owen's great surprise, Gaston returned to the room and ordered a third bottle; for Owen had removed the second, of which Gaston had only drunk his two glasses.

Gaston remained about a quarter of an hour, and then, having no further motive for waiting, he set out.

When they had ridden a short distance, they saw the carriage imbedded in a deep rut, where, in spite of the efforts of the horses and the gardener, it remained stationary. Gaston could not leave him in such a dilemma, and the gardener, recognising Owen, called to him for aid. The two riders dismounted, opened the carriage door, took out the ladies, and succeeded in freeing the carriage, so that they were able to proceed.

An acquaintanceship was thus established, and the poor nun, who was very timid, inquired of Gaston if the road were safe. Gaston reassured her, and said that he and his servant would escort them, and his offer was at once accepted with thanks.

Meanwhile Hélène had played her part admirably, showing that a young girl, however simple and naive, has the instinct of dissimulation, which only requires opportunity to develop itself.

Gaston rode along close to the door, for the road was narrow, and Sister Thérèse asked him many questions. She learned that he was called the Chevalier de Livry, and was the brother of one of the young ladies who had been in the convent school, but who was now married to Montlouis.

They stopped, as previously arranged, at Ancenis.

The gardener confirmed what Gaston had said of his relationship to Mademoiselle de Livry, so that Sister Thérèse had no suspicion, and was very friendly with him.

She was, in fact, delighted, on starting the next morning, to find him already mounted, and to receive his accustomed politeness in handing them into the carriage. As he did so, he slipped a note into Hélène's hand, and by a glance she told him he should receive a reply.

Gaston rode by the side of the carriage, for the road was bad, and assistance was frequently required, either to free a wheel, to assist the ladies to alight for the purpose of walking up a steep ascent, or some of the many accidents of a journey. "My dear Hélène," said Sister Thérèse, several times, "what would have become of us without the aid of this gentleman?"

Before arriving at Angers, Gaston inquired at what hotel they were going to stay, and, finding that it was the same at which he intended to put up, he sent Owen on before to engage apartments.

When they arrived, he received a note, which Hélène had written during dinner. She spoke of her love and happiness as though they were secure and everlasting.

But Gaston looked on the future in its true light. Bound by an oath to undertake a terrible mission, he foresaw sad misfortunes after their present short-lived joy. He remembered that he was about to lose happiness, just as he had tasted it for the first time, and rebelled against his fate. He did not remember that he had sought that conspiracy which now bound him, and which forced him to pursue a path leading to exile or the scaffold, whilst he had in sight another path which would lead him direct to happiness.

It is true that when Gaston joined the conspiracy he did not know Hélène, and thought himself alone in the world. At twenty years of age he had believed that the world had no pleasure for him; then he had met Hélène, and the world became full of pleasure and hope: but it was too late; he had already entered on a career from which he could not draw back.

Meanwhile, in the preoccupation of his mind, Gaston had quite forgotten his suspicions of Owen, and had not noticed that he had spoken to two cavaliers similar to the one whom he had seen the first evening; but Owen lost nothing of what passed between Gaston and Hélène.

As they approached the end of their journey, Gaston

became sad; and when the landlord at Chartres replied to the question of Sister Thérèse, "To-morrow you may, if you choose, reach Rambouillet," it was as though he had said, "To-morrow you separate for ever."

Hélène, who loved as women love, with the strength, or rather the weakness, to sacrifice everything to that love, could not understand Gaston's passive submission to the decrees of Providence, and she would have preferred to have seen him make some effort to combat them.

But Hélène was in this unjust to Gaston; the same ideas tormented him. He knew that at a word from him Hélène would follow him to the end of the world, — he had plenty of gold, — it would be easy for Hélène one evening, instead of going to rest, to go with him into a post-chaise, and in two days they would be beyond the frontier, free and happy, not for a day or a month, but for ever.

But one word, one little word, opposed itself to all this. That word was honour. He had given his oath, and he would be disgraced if he did not keep it.

The last evening Hélène expected that Gaston would speak, but in vain, and she retired to rest with the conviction that Gaston did not love her as she loved him.

That night Gaston never slept, and he rose pale and despairing. They breakfasted at a little village. The nun thought that in the evening she would begin her homeward journey towards her beloved convent. Hélène thought that it was now too late to act, even if Gaston should speak. Gaston thought that he was about to lose for ever the woman whom he loved.

About three o'clock in the afternoon they all alighted to walk up a steep hill, from the summit of which they could see before them a steeple and a number of houses. It was Rambouillet; they did not know it, but they felt that it was.

Gaston was the first to break the silence. "There," said he, "our paths separate. Hélène, I implore you to preserve

the recollection of me, and, whatever happens, do not condemn or curse me."

"Gaston, you only speak of the most terrible things. I need courage, and you take it from me. Have you nothing joyful to tell me? I know the present is dark; but is the future also as dreadful? Are there not many years, and therefore many hopes, to look forward to? We are young, we love one another; are there no means of struggling against the fate which threatens us? Oh, Gaston! I feel in myself a great strength, and if you but say — But no, I am mad; it is I who suffer, and yet I who console."

"I understand you, Hélène, — you want a promise, do you not? Well, judge if I am wretched; I dare not promise. You tell me to hope, and I can but despair. If I had ten years, five years, one year, at my own disposal, I would offer them to you, Hélène, and think myself blessed; but from the moment I leave you we lose each other. From to-morrow morning I belong no more to myself."

"Oh!" cried Hélène, "unhappy that I am! Did you then deceive me when you said you loved me? are you pledged to another?"

"At least, my poor Hélène," said Gaston, "on this point I can reassure you. I have no other love."

"Then we may yet be happy, Gaston, if my new family will recognise you as my husband."

"Hélène, do you not see that every word you utter stabs me to the heart?"

"But at least tell me what it is."

"Fate, which I cannot escape; ties which I dare not break."

"I know of none such," cried the young girl. "I am promised a family, riches, station, and a name; and yet, Gaston, say but one word, and I leave them all for you. Why, then, will you not do as much for me?"

Gaston answered not; and at this moment Sister Thérèse rejoined them, and they again got into the carriage. When they neared the town, the nun called Gaston, told him

that perhaps some one might come to meet Hélène, and that a stranger should not be seen with them. Gaston bowed silently and sadly, and turned to leave them.

Hélène was no ordinary woman; she saw Gaston's distress. "Is it adieu, or *au revoir*?" cried she, boldly.

"*Au revoir*," said Gaston, and he rode off quickly.

CHAPTER VI.

A ROOM IN THE HOTEL AT RAMBOUILLET.

GASTON went away without saying how they were to meet again; but Hélène thought that he would certainly manage that, and she contented herself with watching him as long as she could. Ten minutes later the carriage stopped at the Tigre Royal. A woman who was waiting came out hastily, and respectfully assisted the ladies to alight, and then guided them through the passages of the hotel, preceded by a valet carrying lights.

A door opened, Madame Desroches drew back to allow Hélène and Sister Thérèse to pass, and they soon found themselves on a soft and easy sofa, in front of a bright fire.

The room was large and well furnished; but the taste was severe, for the style called Rococo was not yet introduced. There were four doors: the first was that by which they had entered; the second led to the dining-room, which was already lighted and warmed; the third led into a richly appointed bedroom; the fourth did not open.

Hélène admired the magnificence of all around her,—the quiet and respectful manner of the servants; while Sister Thérèse rejoiced, when she saw the smoking supper, that it was not a fast day.

Presently Madame Desroches returned, and, approaching the sister, handed her a letter. She opened it, and read as follows:—

“Sister Thérèse may pass the night at Rambouillet, or leave again at once, according to her own wish. She will receive two hundred louis offered to the convent by Hélène,

and will give up her charge to the care of Madame Desroches, who is honoured by the confidence of Hélène's parents."

At the bottom of the letter, instead of a signature, was a cipher, which the sister compared with that on a letter which she had brought from Clisson. The identity being proved,—

"My child," said she, "I leave you after supper."

"So soon!" said Hélène, to whom Thérèse was now the only link to her past life.

"Yes, my child. It is at my option to sleep here, but I prefer to return at once; for I wish to be again at home, where the only thing wanting to my happiness will be your presence."

Hélène threw herself on Thérèse's neck, weeping. She recalled her youth, passed so happily among affectionate companions, and she again saw the towers and steeples of her former residence.

They sat down to table, and Sister Thérèse hastily partook of some refreshment, then embraced Hélène, who wished to accompany her to the carriage; but Madame Desroches begged her not to do so, as the hotel was full of strangers.

Hélène then asked permission to see the poor gardener who had been their escort once more. This man had become a friend to her, and she quitted him and Thérèse sadly.

Madame Desroches, seeing that Hélène felt vainly in her pocket, said, "Does mademoiselle want anything?"

"Yes," said Hélène; "I should wish to give a souvenir to this good man."

Madame Desroches gave Hélène twenty-five louis, and she, without counting them, slipped them into the gardener's hand, who overwhelmed her with tears and thanks.

At length they were forced to part, and Hélène, hearing the sound of their carriage driving away, threw herself on a sofa, weeping.

Madame Desroches reminded her that she had eaten nothing. Hélène insisted that she should sup with her. After her meal she showed Hélène her bedroom, saying, "Will mademoiselle ring when she requires her *femme de chambre*; for this evening mademoiselle will receive a visit."

"A visit!" cried Hélène.

"Yes, mademoiselle; from a relation."

"And is it the one who watches over me?"

"From your birth, mademoiselle."

"Oh, mon Dieu!" cried Hélène; "and he is coming?"

"He is most anxious to know you."

"Oh," murmured Hélène; "I feel as if I should faint."

Madame Desroches ran to her, and supported her.

"Do you feel so much terror," asked she, "at seeing one who loves you?"

"It is not terror, it is agitation," said Hélène. "I did not know that it would be to-night; and this important news quite overcomes me."

"But I have not told you all: this person is necessarily surrounded by mystery."

"Why so?"

"I am forbidden to reply to that question, mademoiselle."

"What necessity can there be for such precautions with a poor orphan like me?"

"They are necessary, believe me."

"But in what do they consist?"

"Firstly, you may not see the face of this person; so that you may not recognise him if you meet him in the world."

"Then he will come masked."

"No, mademoiselle: but the lights will be extinguished."

"Then we shall be in darkness?"

"Yes."

"But you will remain with me, Madame Desroches."

"No, mademoiselle; that is expressly forbidden."

"By whom?"

"By the person who is coming."

"But do you, then, owe such absolute obedience to this person?"

"More than that, mademoiselle, I owe him the deepest respect."

"Is he, then, of such high station?"

"He is of the very highest in France."

"And he is my relation?"

"The nearest."

"For heaven's sake, Madame Desroches, do not leave me in uncertainty on this point."

"I have already told you, mademoiselle, that there are some questions to which I am expressly forbidden to reply," and she was about to retire.

"Why do you leave me?" asked Hélène.

"I leave you to your toilet."

"But, madame —"

Madame Desroches made a low, ceremonious curtsy, and went out of the room, closing the door behind her.

CHAPTER VII.

A SERVANT IN THE ROYAL LIVERY. — MONSEIGNEUR LE
DUC D'ORLÉANS.

WHILE the things which we have related were passing in the parlour of the hotel Tigre Royal, in another apartment of the same hotel, seated near a large fire, was a man shaking the snow from his boots, and untying the strings of a large portfolio. This man was dressed in the hunting livery of the house of Orléans: the coat red and silver, large boots, and a three-cornered hat, trimmed with silver. He had a quick eye, a long pointed nose, a round and open forehead, which was contradicted by thin and compressed lips.

This man murmured to himself some phrases which he interrupted by oaths and exclamations, which seemed less the result of words than thoughts.

"Come, come," said he, "M. de Montaran did not deceive me, and our Bretons are hard at the work; but for what earthly reason can he have come by such short stages? He left at noon on the 11th, and only arrived on the evening of the 21st. This probably hides some new mystery, which will be explained by the fellow recommended by Montaran, and with whom my people were in communication on the journey. *Hola!*"

And he rang a silver bell. A man dressed in gray, like those we have seen on the route, appeared.

"Ah! it is you, Tapin?"

"Yes, monseigneur; the affair being important, I thought it better to come myself."

"Have you questioned the men you placed on the road?"

"Yes, monseigneur; but they know nothing but the places at which our conspirators stopped; in fact, that is all they were told to learn."

"I will try to learn from the servant. What sort of man is he?"

"Oh, a mischievous simpleton, half Norman, half Breton; a bad fellow."

"What is he about now?"

"Serving his master's supper."

"Whom, I hope, they have placed as I desired?"

"Yes, monseigneur."

"In a room without curtains?"

"Yes, monseigneur."

"And you have made a hole in the shutter?"

"Yes, monseigneur."

"Well, then, send me the servant, and remain within call."

The man in the red coat consulted his watch.

"Half-past eight," said he; "at this hour monseigneur the regent returns to St. Germain's and asks for Dubois; as Dubois is not there, he rubs his hands and prepares for some folly. Rub your hands, Philippe d'Orléans, and amuse yourself at your pleasure, for the danger is not at Paris, but here. We shall see if you will laugh at my secret police this time. Ah! here is our man."

At this moment Tapin introduced Owen.

"Here is the person you wished to see," said he.

Owen remained standing, trembling, near the door, while Dubois wrapped himself in a large cloak, which left only the upper part of his face visible to him on whom he fixed his cat-like eyes.

"Approach, my friend," said Dubois.

In spite of the cordiality of this invitation, it was given in so harsh a voice that Owen would have preferred being at a greater distance from this man, who looked at him so strangely.

"Well, fellow," said Dubois, seeing that he did not stir, "did you not hear me?"

"Yes, monseigneur," said Owen.

"Then why do you not obey?"

"I did not know you spoke to me."

And Owen then stepped forward.

"You have received fifty louis to speak the truth to me," continued Dubois.

"Pardon, monseigneur," said Owen, who began to recover his composure; "I have not received them; they were promised to me, but —"

Dubois took a handful of gold from his pocket, counted fifty louis, and placed them in a pile on the table.

Owen looked at the pile with an expression of which one would have supposed his dull countenance incapable.

"Good," thought Dubois; "he is avaricious."

In reality, the fifty louis had always appeared very doubtful to Owen. He had betrayed his master with scarcely a hope of obtaining his reward; and now the promised gold was before his eyes.

"May I take them?" asked Owen, spreading his hand towards them.

"Wait a moment," said Dubois, who amused himself by exciting that cupidity which any but a peasant would have concealed; "we will make a bargain."

"What is it?" asked Owen.

"Here are the fifty louis."

"I see them," said Owen, passing his tongue over his lips, like a thirsty dog.

"At every answer you make to a question of mine, I either add ten louis if it is important, or take them away if it is unimportant and stupid."

Owen started; he did not like the terms.

"Now," said Dubois, "let us talk. What place have you come from?"

"Direct from Nantes."

"With whom?"

"With the Chevalier Gaston de Chanlay."

These being preliminary questions, the pile remained undisturbed.

"Listen !" said Dubois.

"I am all attention."

"Did your master travel under his own name ?"

"He set out in his own name, but changed it on the journey."

"What name did he take ?"

"M. de Livry."

Dubois added ten louis ; but as they would not stand on the others, he commenced a second pile.

Owen uttered a joyful cry.

"Oh," said Dubois, "do not exult yet. We are not near the end. Is there a M. de Livry at Nantes ?"

"No, monseigneur ; but there is a Demoiselle de Livry."

"Who is she ?"

"The wife of M. de Montlouis, an intimate friend of my master."

"Good," said Dubois, adding ten louis ; "and what was your master doing at Nantes ?"

"What most young men do ; he hunted, danced, and so on."

Dubois took away ten louis. Owen shuddered.

"Stop," said he, "he did something else."

"Ah ! what was that ?"

"I do not know," replied Owen.

Dubois held the ten louis in his hand.

"And since his departure, what has he done ?"

"He passed through Oudon, Ancenis, Le Mans, Nogent, and Chartres."

Dubois stretched out his hand, and took up another ten louis.

Owen uttered a dolorous cry.

"And did he make no acquaintance on the route ?"

"Yes ; with a young lady from the Augustine convent at Clisson, who was travelling with a sister of the convent, named Thérèse."

"And what was the young lady called ?"

"Mademoiselle Hélène de Chaverny."

"Hélène! A promising name. Doubtless, she is your master's mistress?"

"I do not know," said Owen; "he would not have told me."

"He is a shrewd fellow," said Dubois, taking ten louis from the fifty.

Owen trembled: four such answers, and he would have betrayed his master for nothing.

"And these ladies are going to Paris with him?"

"No, monseigneur; they stop at Rambouillet."

"Ah," said Dubois.

The tone of this exclamation gave Owen some hope.

"Come," said Dubois, "all this is not very important, but one must encourage beginners."

And he added ten louis to the pile.

"Sister Thérèse," continued Owen, "is already gone home."

"So that the young lady remains alone?"

"No," answered Owen.

"How so?"

"A lady from Paris awaited her."

"From Paris?"

"Yes."

"Do you know her name?"

"I heard Sister Thérèse call her Madame Desroches."

"Madame Desroches!" cried Dubois, and he began another pile with ten louis.

"Yes," replied Owen, delighted.

"Are you sure?"

"Of course I am; she is a tall, thin, yellow-looking woman."

Dubois added ten louis. Owen thought that if he had made an interval between each adjective he might have had twenty louis.

"Thin, tall, yellow," repeated Dubois; "just so."

"From forty to forty-five," added Owen.

"Exactly," said Dubois, adding ten louis.

"In a silk dress, with large flowers on it."

"Very good," said Dubois.

Owen saw that his questioner knew enough about the lady, and waited.

"And you say that your master made acquaintance with the young lady *en route*?"

"Yes, monsieur, but I think it was a farce."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that they knew each other before; and I am sure of one thing, that my master waited for her three hours at Oudon."

"Bravo," said Dubois, adding ten louis; "we shall make something of you."

"You do not wish to know anything more, then?" asked Owen, extending his hand towards the two piles of gold.

"Stop," said Dubois; "is the young lady pretty?"

"Beautiful as an angel," answered Owen.

"And, no doubt, they made an appointment to meet in Paris?"

"No, monsieur, I think they said adieu for ever."

"Another farce."

"I do not think so, monsieur; my master was so sad when they separated."

"And they are not to meet again?"

"Yes, once more, I think, and all will be over."

"Well, take your money; and remember that, if you mention one word of this, in ten minutes you will be a dead man."

Owen snatched the money, which disappeared in his pocket instantly.

"And now," said he, "may I go?"

"No, idiot; from this moment you belong to me, for I have bought you, and you will be more useful to me at Paris than elsewhere."

"In that case I will remain, monsieur, I promise."

"There is no need to promise."

At this moment the door opened, and Tapin appeared, looking very much agitated.

"What has happened now?" asked Dubois.

"Something very important, monseigneur; but send away this man."

"Return to your master," said Dubois, "and if he writes to any one whatever, remember that I am most anxious to see his writing."

Owen went out, delighted to be set free.

"Well, Tapin," said Dubois, "what is it?"

"Monseigneur, after the hunt at St. Germain's, his royal highness, instead of returning to Paris, sent away every one, and gave orders to proceed to Rambouillet."

"The regent coming to Rambouillet!"

"He will be here in half an hour, and would have been here now, if hunger had not luckily obliged him to enter the château and procure some refreshment."

"And what is he coming to Rambouillet for?"

"I do not know, monseigneur, unless it be for the young girl who has just arrived with a nun, and who is now in the pavilion of the hotel."

"You are right, Tapin; it is doubtless for her; and Madame Desroches, too. Did you know that Madame Desroches was here?"

"No, monseigneur, I did not."

"And are you sure that your information is correct, my dear Tapin?"

"Oh, monseigneur, it was from L'Eveill , whom I placed near his royal highness; and what he says is gospel truth."

"You are right," said Dubois, who seemed to know the qualities of this man; "if it be L'Eveill , there is no doubt."

"The poor fellow has lamed his horse, which fell near Rambouillet."

"Thirty louis for the horse; he may gain what he can of it."

Tapin took the thirty louis.

"You know the situation of the pavilion, do you not?"

"Perfectly."

"Where is it?"

"One side looks on the second courtyard; the other on a deserted lane."

"Place men in the courtyard and in the lane, disguised as stablemen, or how you please; let no one enter the pavilion but monseigneur and myself: the life of his royal highness is at stake."

"Rest easy, monseigneur."

"Do you know our Breton?"

"I saw him dismount."

"Do your men know him?"

"They all saw him on the road."

"Well, I recommend him to you."

"Shall we arrest him?"

"Certainly not; he must be allowed to go where he pleases, and act as he pleases, and he must have every opportunity to do so. If he were arrested now, he would tell nothing, and our plans would be disconcerted; no, no, these plans must hatch."

"Hatch what, monseigneur?" said Tapin, who appeared to be on confidential terms with Dubois.

"My archbishop's mitre, M. Lecocq," said Dubois. "And now to your work; I go to mine."

Both left the room and descended the staircase, but separated at the door: Lecocq went along the Rue de Paris; and Dubois, slipping along by the wall, went to peep through the hole in the shutter.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE UTILITY OF A SEAL.

GASTON had just supped; for at his age, whether a man be in despair or in love, nature asserts her rights. He was leaning on the table thoughtfully. The lamp threw a light over his face, and enabled Dubois to gratify his curiosity.

He looked at him with an attention almost alarming: his quick eye darted, — his lip curled with a smile, which gave one the idea of a demon smiling at the sight of one of those victims who seem to have vowed their own perdition.

While looking, he murmured, "Young, handsome, black eyes, proud lips; — he is a Breton, he is not corrupted, like the conspirators of Cellamare, by the soft glances of the ladies at court; — then the other spoke of carrying off, dethroning, but this one — *diable*, this one — And yet," continued he, after a pause, "I look in vain for traces of cunning on that open brow. I see no Machiavelism in the corners of that mouth, so full of loyalty and honour; yet no doubt all is arranged to surprise the regent on his visit to this Clisson demoiselle. Who will say again that Bretons have dull brains?"

"No," said Dubois, after another pause, "it cannot be so. It is impossible that this young man with his calm sad face should be ready in a quarter of an hour to kill a man, and that man the first prince of the blood. No, I cannot believe in such *sang-froid*; and yet the regent has kept this amourette secret even from me; he goes out to hunt at St. Germain's, announces aloud that he shall sleep at the Palais Royal, then all at once gives counter orders,

and drives to Rambouillet. At Rambouillet, the young girl waits, and is received by Madame Desroches; who can she be watching for, if not for the regent? and this young girl is the mistress of the chevalier — but is she? — Ah! we must learn. We must find out how far we can depend on Owen,” and Dubois left his observatory and waited on the staircase. He was quite hidden in the shade, and he could see Gaston’s door in the light.

The door presently opened, and Owen appeared.

He held a letter in his hand, and, after hesitating a minute, he appeared to have taken his determination, and mounted the staircase.

“Good,” said Dubois, “he has tasted the forbidden fruit, and he is mine.”

Then, stopping Owen: “Give me the letter which you were bringing me, and wait here.”

“How did you know I had a letter?” asked Owen, bewildered.

Dubois shrugged his shoulders, took the letter, and disappeared.

In his room he examined the seal; the chevalier, who had no wax, had used that on the bottle, and had sealed it with the stone of a ring.

Dubois held the letter above the candle, and the wax melted. He opened the letter and read: —

“DEAR HÉLÈNE, — Your courage has doubled mine; manage so that I can enter the house, and you shall know my plans.”

“Oh!” said Dubois, “it seems she does not know them yet. Things are not so far advanced as I supposed.”

He resealed the letter with one of the numerous rings which he wore, and which resembled that of the chevalier, and calling Owen, —

“Here,” said he, “is your master’s letter; deliver it faithfully, bring me the answer, and you shall have ten louis.”

"Ah!" thought Owen, "has this man a mine of gold?" And he went off.

Ten minutes after he returned with the reply.

It was on scented and ornamented paper, sealed with the letter H.

Dubois opened a box, took out a kind of paste in which he was about to take the impression of the seal, when he observed that from the manner in which it was folded he could read it without opening. It was as follows:—

"The person who sent for me at Bretagne is coming to meet me here instead of waiting at Paris, so impatient is he, I am told, to see me. I think he will leave again to-night. Come to-morrow morning before nine. I will tell you all that has passed, and then we can arrange how to act."

"This," said Dubois, still taking H  l  ne for the chevalier's accomplice, "makes it clearer. If this is the way they bring up young ladies at Clisson, I congratulate them and monseigneur, who, from her age, concludes her to be simple and ingenuous. Here," said he to Owen, "here is the letter, and your ten louis."

Owen took them.

At this moment ten o'clock struck, and the rolling of a carriage was heard. Dubois went to the window, and saw it stop at the hotel door.

In the carriage was a gentleman whom Dubois at once recognised as Lafare, captain of his royal highness's guards. "Well," said he, "he is more prudent than I thought; but where is he? Ah!"

This exclamation was uttered at the sight of a man dressed in the same red livery which he himself concealed under his cloak, and who followed the carriage mounted on a superb Spanish jenet, which, however, he could not have ridden long, for, while the carriage horses were covered with foam, this one was quite fresh.

Lafare at once demanded a room and supper; meanwhile the man dismounted, threw the reins to a page, and went towards the pavilion.

"Well," said Dubois, "all this is as clear as a mountain stream; but how is it that the face of the chevalier does not appear? Is he too much occupied with his chicken to have heard the carriage? Let us see. As to you, monseigneur," continued Dubois, "be assured; I will not disturb your *tête-à-tête*. Enjoy at your pleasure this commencement of ingenuity, which promises such happy results. Ah! monseigneur, it is certain that you are short-sighted."

Dubois went down, and again took up his post at his observatory. As he approached it, Gaston rose, after putting his note in his pocket-book.

"Ah," said Dubois, "I must have that pocket-book. I would pay high for it. He is going out, he buckles on his sword, he looks for his cloak; where is he going? Let us see: to wait for his Royal Highness's exit? No, no, that is not the face of a man who is going to kill another; I could sooner believe he was about to spend the evening under the windows of his sweetheart.

"Ah, if he had that idea it would be a means —"

It would be difficult to render the expression which passed over the face of Dubois at this moment.

"Yes, but if I were to get a sword-thrust in the enterprise, how monseigneur would laugh! Bah! there is no danger: our men are at their post; and, besides, nothing venture, nothing gain."

Encouraged by this reflection, Dubois made the circuit of the hotel, in order to appear at one end of the little lane as Gaston appeared at the other.

As he had expected, at the end of the lane he found Tapin, who had placed L'Eveill   in the courtyard; in two words he explained his project. Tapin pointed out to Dubois one man leaning on the step of an outer door, a second was playing a kind of Jew's harp, and seemed an

itinerant musician, and there was another, too well hidden to be seen.

Dubois, thus sure of support, returned into the lane.

He soon perceived a figure at the other end, and at once recognised the chevalier, who was too thoughtful even to notice that he was passing any one.

Dubois wanted a quarrel, and he saw that he must take the initiative. He turned and stopped before the chevalier, who was trying to discover which were the windows of the room in which H  l  ne was.

"My friend," said he, roughly, "what are you doing at this hour before this house?"

Gaston was obliged to bring back his thoughts to the materialism of life.

"Did you speak to me, monsieur?" said he.

"Yes," replied Dubois, "I asked what you were doing here."

"Pass on," said the chevalier; "I do not interfere with you: do not interfere with me."

"That might be," said Dubois, "if your presence did not annoy me."

"This lane, narrow as it is, is wide enough for both, monsieur; walk on one side, and I will walk on the other."

"I wish to walk alone," said Dubois, "therefore, I beg you will choose some other window; there are plenty at Rambouillet to choose from."

"And why should I not look at these windows if I choose?" asked Chanlay.

"Because they are those of my wife," replied Dubois.

"Of your wife!"

"Yes; of my wife, who has just arrived from Paris, and of whom I am jealous, I warn you."

"Diable," murmured Gaston; "he must be the husband of the person to whom H  l  ne has been given in charge;" and in order to conciliate a person who might be useful to him, —

"Monsieur," said he, politely, "in that case I am willing to leave a place where I was walking without any object in view."

"Oh," thought Dubois, "here is a polite conspirator; I must have a quarrel."

Gaston was going away.

"You are deceiving me, monsieur," said Dubois.

The chevalier turned as though he had been bitten by a serpent; however, prudent for the sake of Hélène, and for the mission he had undertaken, he restrained himself.

"Is it," said he, "because I was polite that you disbelieve my word?"

"You spoke politely because you were afraid; but it is none the less true that I saw you looking at that window."

"Afraid, — I afraid!" cried Chanlay, facing him; "did you say that I was afraid?"

"I did," replied Dubois.

"Do you, then, seek a quarrel?"

"It appears so. I see you come from Quimper-Corentin."

"Pâques Dieu!" said Gaston, drawing his sword, "draw!"

"And you, off with your coat," said Dubois, throwing off his cloak, and preparing to do the same with his coat.

"Why so?" asked the chevalier.

"Because I do not know you, monsieur, and because those who walk at night frequently have their coat prudently lined with a shirt of mail."

At these words the chevalier's cloak and coat were thrown aside; but, at the moment when Gaston was about to rush on his adversary, the four men appeared and seized him.

"A duel, monsieur," cried they, "in spite of the king's prohibition!" and they dragged him towards the door.

"An assassination," murmured Gaston, not daring to cry out, for fear of compromising Hélène; "cowards!"

"We are betrayed, monsieur," said Dubois, rolling up Gaston's cloak and coat, and putting them under his arm; "we shall meet again to-morrow, no doubt."

And he ran towards the hotel, while they shut up Gaston in the lower room.

Dubois ran up the staircase and into his room, where he opened the precious pocket-book. He found in one pocket a broken coin and a man's name. This coin was evidently a sign of recognition, and the name was probably that of the man to whom Gaston was addressed, and who was called Captain La Jonquière. The paper was oddly folded.

"La Jonquière," said Dubois ; "we have our eyes on *him* already."

He looked over the rest of the pocket-book, — there was nothing.

"It is little," said Dubois, "but it is enough."

He folded a paper like the other, took the name, and rang the bell.

Some one knocked ; the door was fastened inside. "I forgot," said Dubois, opening it, and giving entrance to Monsieur Tapin.

"What have you done with him ?"

"He is in the lower room, and watched."

"Take back his cloak and coat to the place where he threw them ; make your excuses, and set him free. Take care that everything is in his pockets, so that he may suspect nothing. Bring me my coat and cloak."

Monsieur Tapin bowed low, and went to obey his orders.

CHAPTER IX.

THE VISIT.

ALL this passed, as we have said, in the lane under Hélène's windows. She had heard the noise; and, as among the voices she thought she distinguished that of the chevalier, she ran anxiously to the window, when, at the same moment, Madame Desroches appeared.

She came to beg Hélène to go into the drawing-room, as the visitor had arrived.

Hélène started, and nearly fell; her voice failed her, and she followed, silent and trembling.

The room into which Madame Desroches led her was without any light, except what was thrown on the carpet by the last remains of a fire. Madame Desroches threw some water over the flame, and left the room entirely dark.

Begging Hélène to have no fear, Madame Desroches withdrew. The instant after, Hélène heard a voice behind the fourth door, which had not yet opened.

She started at the sound, and involuntarily made a few steps towards the door.

"Is she ready?" said the voice.

"Yes, monseigneur," was the reply.

"Monseigneur!" murmured Hélène; "who is coming, then?"

"Is she alone?"

"Yes, monseigneur."

"Is she aware of my arrival?"

"Yes, monseigneur."

"We shall not be interrupted?"

"Monseigneur may rely upon me."

"And no light?"

"None whatever."

The steps approached, then stopped.

"Speak frankly, Madame Desroches," said the voice.

"Is she as pretty as they said?"

"More beautiful than your highness can imagine."

"Your highness! who can he be?" thought Hélène, much agitated.

At this moment the door creaked on its hinges, and a heavy step approached.

"Mademoiselle," said the voice, "I beg you to receive and hear me."

"I am here," said Hélène, faintly.

"Are you frightened?"

"I confess it, mon-- Shall I say 'monsieur' or 'monseigneur'?"

"Say 'my friend.'"

At this moment her hand touched that of the unknown.

"Madame Desroches, are you there?" asked Hélène, drawing back.

"Madame Desroches," said the voice, "tell mademoiselle that she is as safe as in a temple before God."

"Ah! monseigneur, I am at your feet; pardon me."

"Rise, my child, and seat yourself there. Madame Desroches, close all the doors; and now," continued he, "give me your hand, I beg."

Hélène's hand again met that of the stranger, and this time it was not withdrawn.

"He seems to tremble also," murmured she.

"Tell me, are you afraid, dear child?"

"No," replied Hélène; "but when your hand clasps mine, a strange thrill passes through me."

"Speak to me, Hélène," said the unknown, with an expression of tenderness. "I know already that you are beautiful, but this is the first time I have heard your voice. Speak, — I am listening."

"But have you seen me, then?" asked Hélène.

"Do you remember that two years ago the abbess had your portrait taken?"

"Yes, I remember. An artist came expressly from Paris."

"It was I who sent him."

"And was the portrait for you?"

"It is here," said the unknown, taking from his pocket a miniature, which H  l  ne could feel, though she could not see it.

"But what interest could you have in the portrait of a poor orphan?"

"H  l  ne, I am your father's friend."

"My father! Is he alive?"

"Yes."

"Shall I ever see him?"

"Perhaps."

"Oh!" said H  l  ne, pressing the stranger's hand, "I bless you for bringing me this news."

"Dear child!" said he.

"But if he be alive," said H  l  ne, "why has he not sought out his child?"

"He had news of you every month, and, though at a distance, watched over you."

"And yet," said H  l  ne, reproachfully, "he has not seen me for sixteen years."

"Believe me, none but the most important reasons would have induced him to deprive himself of this pleasure."

"I believe you, monsieur; it is not for me to accuse my father."

"No; it is for you to pardon him if he accuses himself."

"To pardon him!" cried H  l  ne.

"Yes; and this pardon, which he cannot ask for himself, I ask in his name."

"Monsieur," said H  l  ne, "I do not understand you."

"Listen, then, and give me back your hand."

"Here it is."

"Your father was an officer in the king's service; at the

battle of Neerwinden, where he charged at the head of the king's household troops, one of his followers, called M. de Chaverny, fell near him, pierced by a ball. Your father wished to assist him, but the wound was mortal, and the wounded man, who knew that it was so, said, 'Think not of me, but of my child.' Your father pressed his hand as a promise, and the man fell back and died, as though he only waited this assurance to close his eyes. You are listening, are you not, Hélène?"

"Oh! need you ask such a question?" said the young girl.

"At the end of the campaign, your father's first care was for the little orphan. She was a charming child, of from ten to twelve years, who promised to be as beautiful as you are. The death of M. de Chaverny, her father, left her without support or fortune; your father placed her at the convent of the Faubourg Saint Antoine, and announced that at a proper age he should give her a dowry."

"I thank God," cried Hélène, "for having made me the child of a man who so nobly kept his promise."

"Wait, Hélène," said the unknown, "for now comes the time when your father will not receive your praises."

Hélène was silent.

The unknown continued: "Your father, indeed, watched over the orphan till her eighteenth year. She was an adorable young girl, and his visits to the convent became longer and more frequent than they should have been; your father began to love his *protégée*. At first he was frightened at his own love, for he remembered his promise to her dying father. He begged the superior to look for a suitable husband for Mademoiselle de Chaverny, and was told that her nephew, a young Breton, having seen her, loved her, and wished to obtain her hand."

"Well, monsieur?" asked Hélène, hearing that the unknown hesitated to proceed.

"Well; your father's surprise was great, Hélène, when he learned from the superior that Mademoiselle de Chaverny

had replied that she did not wish to marry, and that her greatest desire was to remain in the convent where she had been brought up, and that the happiest day of her life would be that on which she should pronounce her vows."

"She loved some one," said H  l  ne.

"Yes, my child, you are right, — alas ! we cannot avoid our fate, — Mademoiselle de Chaverny loved your father. For a long time she kept her secret, but one day, when your father begged her to renounce her strange wish to take the veil, the poor child confessed all. Strong against his love when he did not believe it returned, he succumbed when he found he had but to desire and to obtain. They were both so young — your father scarcely twenty-five, she not eighteen — they forgot the world, and only remembered that they could be happy."

"But, since they loved," said H  l  ne, "why did they not marry ?"

"Union was impossible, on account of the distance which separated them. Do you not know that your father is of high station ?"

"Alas ! yes," said H  l  ne, "I know it."

"During a year," continued he, "their happiness surpassed their hopes ; but at the end of that time you came into the world, and then —"

"Well ?" asked the young girl, timidly.

"Your birth cost your mother's life."

H  l  ne sobbed.

"Yes," continued the unknown, in a voice full of emotion, "yes, H  l  ne, weep for your mother ; she was a noble woman, of whom, through his griefs, his pleasures, even his follies, your father retains a tender recollection ; he transferred to you all his love for her."

"And yet," said H  l  ne, "he consented to remove me from him, and has never again seen me."

"H  l  ne, on this point pardon your father, for it was not his fault. You were born in 1703, at the most austere period of Louis XIV.'s reign ; your father was already out

of favour with the king, or rather with Madame de Maintenon; and for your sake, as much or more than for his, he sent you into Bretagne, confiding you to Mother Ursula, superior of the convent where you were brought up. At length, Louis XIV. being dead, and everything having changed through all France, it is decided to bring you nearer to him. During the journey, however, you must have seen that his care was over you, and when he knew that you were at Rambouillet, he could not wait till to-morrow, — he is come to you here, Hélène."

"Oh, mon Dieu!" cried Hélène, "is this true?"

"And in seeing, or rather in listening to you, he thinks he hears your mother, — the same accent in the voice. Hélène, Hélène, that you may be happier than she was is his heartfelt prayer!"

"Oh, heavens!" cried Hélène, "this emotion, your trembling hand. Monsieur, you said my father is come to meet me."

"Yes."

"Here at Rambouillet?"

"Yes."

"You say he is happy to see me again?"

"Oh, yes, very happy!"

"But this happiness was not enough, is it not so? He wished to speak to me, to tell me himself the story of my life, that I may thank him for his love, that I may fall at his feet, that I may ask his blessing. Oh!" cried Hélène, kneeling, "oh, I am at your feet; bless me, father!"

"Hélène, my child, my daughter!" cried the unknown, "not at my feet, but in my arms!"

"My father, my father!" was Hélène's only reply.

"And yet," continued he, "I came with a different intention, prepared to deny all, to remain a stranger to you; but having you so near me, pressing your hand, hearing your voice, I had not the strength. But do not make me repent my weakness, and let secrecy —"

"I swear by my mother's grave," cried H  l  ne.

"That is all I desire," cried the unknown. "Now listen, for I must leave you."

"What, already!"

"It must be so."

"Speak, then, my father. I am ready to obey you."

"To-morrow you leave for Paris; there is a house there destined for you. Madame Desroches will take you there, and at the very first moment that I can do so I will come there to see you."

"Soon, I hope, for do not forget that I am alone in the world."

"As soon as possible;" and, pressing his lips to H  l  ne's forehead, the unknown imprinted on it one of those kisses as sweet to the heart of a father as a kiss of love to the heart of a lover.

Ten minutes later, Madame Desroches entered with a light. H  l  ne was on her knees praying; without rising, she signed to Madame Desroches to place the light on the chimney-piece, which that lady did, and then retired.

H  l  ne, after praying for some time, rose, and looked around her as though for some evidence that the whole was not a dream; her own emotion, however, assured her that it was really a great event in her life which had taken place. Then the thought of Gaston rose to her mind; this father whom she had so dreaded to see, — this father, who himself had loved so ardently and suffered so deeply, would not do violence to her love; besides, Gaston was a scion of an ancient house, and beyond all this she loved him, so that she would die if she were separated from him, and her father would not wish her death.

The obstacles on Gaston's side could be but the right, and would doubtless be easily overcome, and H  l  ne fell asleep to dream of a happy and smiling future.

Gaston, on his part, set at liberty with many apologies from those who pretended to have mistaken him for another person, went back to fetch his coat and cloak, which

he was overjoyed to find where he had left them; he anxiously opened his pocket-book; it was as he had left it, and for greater safety he now burnt the address of La Jonquière. He gave his orders for the next day to Owen and retired.

Meanwhile, two carriages rolled away from the door of the Tigre-Royal; in the first were two gentlemen in travelling costume, preceded and followed by outriders.

In the second was a single traveller, wrapped in a large cloak; this carriage followed close behind the other as far as the Barrière de l'Étoile, where they separated, and while the first stopped at the Palais Royal, the other drew up at the Rue de Valois.

CHAPTER X.

IN WHICH DUBOIS PROVES THAT HIS POLICE WAS BETTER ORGANISED AT AN EXPENSE OF 300,000 FRANCS THAN THE GENERAL POLICE FOR THREE MILLIONS.

WHATEVER might have been the fatigues of the preceding night, the Duc d'Orléans still gave his mornings to business. He generally began to work with Dubois before he was dressed; then came a short and select levée, followed again by audiences, which kept him till eleven or twelve o'clock; then the chiefs of the councils (La Vallière and Le Blanc) came to give an account of their espionage; then Torcy, to bring any important letters which he had abstracted. At half-past two the regent had his chocolate, which he always took while laughing and chatting. This lasted half an hour; then came the audience hour for ladies, after that he went to the Duchesse d'Orléans, then to the young king, whom he visited every day, and to whom he always displayed the greatest reverence and respect.

Once a week he received foreign ministers, and on Sundays heard mass in his private chapel.

At six on council days, at five on others, all business was over; then the regent would go to the opera, or to Madame de Berry, with whom, however, he had quarrelled now, on account of her marriage with Riom. Then came those famous suppers.

They were composed of from ten to fifteen persons, and the regent's presence amongst them sometimes added to their license and freedom, but never restrained it.

At these suppers, kings, ministers, chancellors, ladies of the court, were all passed in review, discussed, abused;

everything might be said, everything told, everything done; provided only that it were wittily said, told, or done. When all the guests had arrived, the doors were closed and barred, so that it was impossible to reach the regent until the following morning, however urgent might be the necessity.

Dubois was seldom of the number, his bad health forbade it; and this was the time chosen to pick him to pieces, at which the regent would laugh as heartily as any one. Dubois knew that he often furnished the amusement of these suppers, but he also knew that by the morning the regent invariably forgot what had been said the night before, and so he cared little about it.

Dubois, however, watched while the regent supped or slept, and seemed indefatigable; he appeared to have the gift of ubiquity.

When he returned from Rambouillet, he called Maître Tapin, who had returned on horseback, and talked with him for an hour, after which he slept for four or five, then, rising, he presented himself at the door of his royal highness; the regent was still asleep.

Dubois approached the bed and contemplated him with a smile which at once resembled that of an ape and a demon.

At length he decided to wake him.

"Holla, monseigneur, wake up!" he cried.

The duke opened his eyes, and, seeing Dubois, turned his face to the wall, saying,—

"Ah! is that you, abbé? go to the devil!"

"Monseigneur, I have just been there, but he was too busy to receive me, and sent me to you."

"Leave me alone; I am tired."

"I dare say, the night was stormy."

"What do you mean?" asked the duke, turning half round.

"I mean that the way you spent the night does not suit a man who makes appointments for seven in the morning."

"Did I appoint you for seven in the morning?"

"Yes, yesterday morning, before you went to St. Germain's."

"It is true," said the regent.

"Monseigneur did not know that the night would be so fatiguing."

"Fatiguing! I left table at seven."

"And afterwards?"

"Well! what afterwards?"

"Are you satisfied, monseigneur, and was the young person worth the journey?"

"What journey?"

"The journey you took after you left the table at seven."

"One would think, to hear you, that from St. Germain's here, was a long distance."

"No, monseigneur is right; it is but a few steps, but there is a method of prolonging the distance."

"What is that?"

"Going round by Rambouillet."

"You are dreaming, abbé."

"Possibly, monseigneur. I will tell you my dream; it will at least prove to your highness that even in my dreams I do not forget you."

"Some new nonsense."

"Not at all. I dreamed that monseigneur started the stag at Le Treillage, and that the animal, after some battling, worthy of a stag of high birth, was taken at Cham-bourey."

"So far, your dream resembles the truth; continue, abbé."

"After which, monseigneur returned to St. Germain's, sat down to table at half-past five, and ordered that the carriage without arms should be prepared and harnessed, with four horses at half-past seven."

"Not bad, abbé, not bad; go on."

"At half-past seven, monseigneur dismissed every one except Lafare, with whom he entered the carriage. Am I right?"

"Go on; go on."

"The carriage went towards Rambouillet, and arrived there at a quarter to ten, but at the entrance of the town it stopped, Lafare went on in the carriage to the Tigre Royal, monseigneur following as an outrider."

"Here your dream becomes confused, abbé."

"No, no, not at all."

"Continue, then."

"Well, while Lafare pretended to eat a bad supper, which was served by waiters who called him Excellency, monseigneur gave his horse to a page and went to a little pavilion."

"Demon, where were you hidden?"

"I, monseigneur, have not left the Palais Royal, where I slept like a dormouse, and the proof is that I am telling you my dream."

"And what was there in the pavilion?"

"First, at the door, a horrible duenna, tall, thin, dry, and yellow."

"Dubois, I will recommend you to Desroches, and the first time she sees you, she will tear your eyes out."

"Then inside, mon Dieu! inside."

"You could not see that, even in a dream, abbé."

"Monseigneur, you may take away the 300,000 francs which you allow me for my secret police, if, by their aid, I did not see into the interior."

"Well, what did you see?"

"Ma foi, monseigneur, a charming little Bretonne, sixteen or seventeen years old, beautiful, coming direct from the Augustine convent at Clisson, accompanied to Rambouillet by one of the sisters, whose troublesome presence was soon dispensed with, was it not?"

"Dubois, I have often thought you were the devil, who has taken the form of an abbé to ruin me."

"To save you, monseigneur, to save you."

"To save me; I do not believe it."

"Well," said Dubois, "are you pleased with her?"

"Enchanted, Dubois; she is charming."

"Well, you have brought her from so far that, if she were not, you would be quite cheated."

The regent frowned, but, reflecting that probably Dubois did not know the rest, the frown changed to a smile.

"Dubois," said he, "certainly, you are a great man."

"Ah, monseigneur, no one but you doubts it, and yet you disgrace me —"

"Disgrace you!"

"Yes, you hide your loves from me."

"Come, do not be vexed, Dubois."

"There is reason, however, you must confess, monseigneur."

"Why?"

"Why did you not tell me you wanted a Bretonne. Could not I have sent for one?"

"Yes."

"Yes, of course I could."

"As good?"

"Yes, and better."

"You think you have found a treasure, perhaps?"

"Hola, hola!"

"Well, when you know what she is, and to what you expose yourself."

"Do not jest, abbé, I beg."

"Ah! monseigneur, you distress me."

"What do you mean?"

"That you are taken by a glance, a single night fascinates you, and there is no one to compare to the new-comer. Is she then very pretty?"

"Charming."

"And discreet? virtue itself, I suppose."

"You are right."

"Well, I tell you, monseigneur, you are lost."

"I?"

"Yes; your Bretonne is a jade."

"Silence, abbé."

"Why silence?"

"I forbid you to say another word."

"Monseigneur, you, too, have had a dream,—let me explain it."

"Monsieur Joseph, I will send you to the Bastille."

"As you please, monseigneur, but still you must know that this girl—"

"Is my daughter, abbé."

Dubois drew back stupefied.

"Your daughter; and who is her mother?"

"An honest woman, who had the honour of dying without knowing you."

"And the child?"

"The child has been concealed, that she might not be sullied by the looks of such creatures as you."

Dubois bowed, and retired, respectfully.

The regent looked triumphant.

"Ah!" said Dubois, who had not quite closed the door, "I thought this plot would bring me my archbishop's mitre. If I am careful, it will bring me my cardinal's hat."

CHAPTER XI.

RAMBOUILLET AGAIN.

At the appointed hour Gaston presented himself at Hélène's domicile, but Madame Desroches made some difficulty about admitting him; Hélène, however, said firmly that she was quite at liberty to judge for herself what was right, and that she was quite determined to see M. de Livry, who had come to take leave of her. It will be remembered that this was the name which Gaston had assumed during the journey, and which he intended to retain, except when with those connected with his mission to Paris.

Madame Desroches went to her room somewhat out of humour, and even attempted to overhear the conversation, but Hélène bolted the outer door.

"Ah, Gaston," said she, "I have been expecting you. I did not sleep last night."

"Nor I, Hélène; but I must admire all this splendour."

Hélène smiled.

"And your head-dress, — how beautiful you are like this!"

"You do not appear much pleased."

Gaston made no reply, but continued his investigations.

"These rich hangings, these costly pictures, all prove that your protectors are opulent, Hélène."

"I believe so," said Hélène, smiling, "yet I am told that these hangings, and this gilding, which you admire, are old and unfashionable, and must be replaced by new."

"Ah, Hélène, you will become a great lady," said Gaston, sighing; "already I am kept waiting for an audience."

"My dear Gaston, did you not wait for hours in your little boat on the lake?"

"You were then in the convent. I waited the abbess's pleasure."

"That title is sacred, is it not?"

"Yes."

"It gives security, imposes respect and obedience."

"Doubtless."

"Well, judge of my delight. Here I find the same protection, the same love, only more powerful, more lasting."

"What!" exclaimed Gaston, surprised.

"I find —"

"Speak, in Heaven's name."

"Gaston, I have found a father."

"A father! Ah, my dear Hélène, I share your joy; what happiness! a father to watch over my Hélène, my wife!"

"To watch from afar."

"Is he separated from you?"

"Alas! it seems the world separates us."

"Is it a secret?"

"A secret even to me, or you may be sure you should know all. I have no secrets from you, Gaston."

"A misfortune of birth, — a prescription in your family, — some temporary obstacle?"

"I do not know."

"Decidedly, it is a secret; but," said he, smiling, "I permit you to be discreet with me, if your father ordered it. However, may I ask some more questions?"

"Oh, yes."

"Are you pleased? Is your father one you can be proud of?"

"I think so, his heart seems noble and good. His voice is sweet and melodious."

"His voice! but is he like you?"

"I do not know. I have not seen him."

"Not seen him!"

"No, it was dark."

"Your father did not wish to see his daughter; and you, so beautiful; oh, what indifference!"

"No, Gaston, he is not indifferent; he knows me well; he has my portrait, — that portrait which made you so jealous last spring."

"But I do not understand this."

"It was dark, I tell you."

"In that case one might light these girandoles," said Gaston.

"That is well, when one wishes to be seen; but when one has reasons for concealment —"

"What!" interrupted Gaston; "what reason can a father have for hiding from his own daughter?"

"Excellent reasons, I believe, and you should understand them better than I can."

"Oh, Hélène!" said Gaston, "with what terrible ideas you fill my mind."

"You alarm me, Gaston!"

"Tell me, — what did your father speak of?"

"Of his deep love for me."

Gaston started.

"He swore to me that in future I should be happy; that there should be no more uncertainty as to my fate, for that he would despise all those considerations which had induced him as yet to disown me as a daughter."

"Words, words; but what proof did he give you? Pardon me these questions, Hélène. I dread misfortune. I wish that for a time your angel's innocence could give place to the sharpness and infernal sagacity of a fiend; you would then understand me. I should not need to subject you to this interrogatory, which now is so necessary."

"I do not understand your question, Gaston. I do not know how to reply to you."

"Did he show you much affection?"

"Yes."

"But, in the darkness, when he wished to speak to you?"

"He took my hand, and his trembled the most."

Gaston clenched his hands with rage.

"He embraced you paternally, did he not?"

"He gave me a single kiss on the forehead, which I received on my knees."

"Hélène!" he cried, "my fears were not groundless; you are betrayed, — you are the victim of a snare. Hélène, this man who conceals himself, who fears the light, who calls you his child, is not your father."

"Gaston, you distress me."

"Hélène, angels might envy your innocence; but on earth all is abused, even angels are insulted, profaned, by men. This man, whom I will know, whom I will seize and force to have confidence in your love and honour, shall tell me — if he be not the vilest of beings — whether I am to call him father, or kill him as a wretch!"

"Gaston, your brain is wandering; what can lead you to suspect such treachery? And, since you arouse my suspicions, since you hold a light over those ignoble labyrinths of the human heart which I refused to contemplate, I will speak to you with the same freedom. Was I not in this man's power? Is not this house his? Are not the people by whom I am surrounded devoted to his orders? Gaston, if you love me, you will ask my pardon for what you have thought and said of my father."

Gaston was in despair.

"Do not destroy one of the purest and holiest joys I have ever tasted. Do not poison the happiness of a life which I have often wept to think was solitary and abandoned, without other affection than that of which Heaven forbids us to be lavish. Let my filial ties compensate for the remorse which I sometimes feel for loving you almost to idolatry."

"Hélène, forgive me," cried Gaston. "Yes, you are right; I sully your pure joys by my contact, and it may be the noble affection of your father; but in Heaven's name, Hélène, give some heed to the fears of my experience and my love. Criminal passions often speculate on innocent credulity. The argument you use is weak. To show at

once a guilty love would be unlike a skilful corrupter; but to win you by a novel luxury pleasing to your age, to accustom you gradually to new impressions, to win you at last by persuasion, is a sweeter victory than that of violence. Hélène, listen to my prudence of five-and-twenty years,—I say my prudence, for it is my love that speaks, that love which you should see so humble, so devoted, so ready to accept a father whom I knew to be really your parent.”

Hélène made no answer.

“I implore you,” continued Gaston, “not to take any determination now, but to watch everything around you. Suspect the perfumes which are given you, the wine which you are offered,—everything, Hélène. Watch over yourself,—you are my happiness, my honour, my life.”

“My friend, I will obey you; this will not keep me from loving my father.”

“Adore him, Hélène, if I am wrong.”

“You are a noble friend, Gaston. We are agreed, then?”

“At the slightest suspicion write to me.”

“Write! You leave me then?”

“I must go to Paris on business. I shall be at the Hôtel Muids d’Amour, Rue des Bourdonnais. Write down this address, and do not show it to any one.”

“Why so many precautions?”

Gaston hesitated.

“Because, if your devoted protector were known, his plans for aiding you might be frustrated in case of bad intentions.”

“You are somewhat mysterious, Gaston. I have a father who conceals himself, and a lover—this word I can hardly speak—who is going to do the same.”

“But my intentions you know,” said Gaston, attempting to force a laugh.

“Ah, Madame Desroches is coming back. She thinks our interview too long. I am as much under tutelage as at the convent.”

Gaston imprinted a kiss on the hand Hélène held out to him. As Madame Desroches appeared, Hélène made a formal curtsy, which Gaston returned by an equally formal bow.

Gaston left for Paris. Owen awaited him with impatience, and this time could not reproach his master with being slow, for in three hours they were in Paris.

CHAPTER XII.

CAPTAIN LA JONQUIÈRE.

THERE was, as the reader has learned, in the Rue des Bourdonnais a hotel where one could lodge, eat, and drink.

In his nocturnal interview with Dubois, Tapin had received the famous name of La Jonquière, and had transmitted it to L'Eveillé, who had passed it to all the chiefs of police, who had begun to search for the suspected officer in all the equivocal houses in Paris. The conspiracy of Cellamare, which we have related in a history of the Chevalier d'Harmental, had taught them that everywhere conspirators were to be found.

It was, however, by luck or by cleverness, Maître Tapin himself who, in the Rue des Bourdonnais and in the Hôtel Muids d'Amour, found La Jonquière, who was then a nightmare to Dubois.

The landlord took Tapin to be an old attorney's clerk, and replied to his questions politely, that "the Captain La Jonquière was in the hotel, but was asleep."

Tapin asked no more. La Jonquière was asleep, therefore he was in bed, for it was only six in the morning; if he were in bed, then he must be stopping at the inn.

Tapin went back to the Palais Royal, and found Dubois, who had just left the regent. A number of false La Jonquières had already been discovered by his emissaries. One was a smuggler, called Captain La Joncière, whom L'Eveillé had found and arrested. A second was La Jonquille, sergeant in the French Guards, and many others.

"Well," said Dubois, when Tapin had made his report, "you have found the real Captain La Jonquière, then?"

"Yes, monseigneur."

"Is he called La Jonquière?"

"Yes, monseigneur."

"L-a, la; J-o-n, jon; q-u-i-è-r-e, quière?" continued he, spelling the word.

"La Jonquière," repeated Tapin.

"A captain."

"Yes, monseigneur."

"What is he doing?"

"Waiting and drinking."

"That must be he," said Dubois; "and does he pay?"

He evidently attached great importance to the question.

"Very well, monsieur."

"A la bonne heure, Tapin. You have some sense."

"Monseigneur," said Tapin, modestly, "you flatter me; it is quite clear, if he had not paid, he could not have been a dangerous man."

Dubois gave him ten louis as a reward, gave him some further orders, and set out at once to go to the Rue des Bourdonnais.

Let us say a word regarding the interior of the hotel. It was partly hotel, partly public house; the dwelling rooms were on the first floor, and the tavern rooms on the ground floor.

The principal of these, the common room, had four oak tables, and a quantity of red and white curtains; some benches along the wall, some glasses on a sideboard, some handsomely framed pictures, all blackened and rendered nauseous by smoke, completed the *tout ensemble* of this room, in which sat a fat man with a red face, thirty-five or forty years old, and a little pale girl of twelve or fourteen.

This was the landlord and his only daughter and heiress.

A servant was cooking a ragout in the kitchen.

As the clock struck one, a French guard entered, and, stopping at the threshold, murmured, "Rue des Bourdonnais, Muirs d'Amour, in the common room, to sit at the table on the left, and wait."

Then, in accordance with this, the worthy defender of his country, whistling a tune and twirling his moustache, seated himself at the place indicated.

Scarcely had he had time to seat himself and strike his fist on the table, which, in the language of all taverns, means "Some wine," than a second guard, dressed exactly like the first, appeared at the door, murmured some words, and, after a little hesitation, seated himself by the other.

The two soldiers looked at each other, and both exclaimed, —

"Ah!" which in all languages means surprise.

"It is you, Grippart," said one.

"It is you, L'Eulevant," said the other.

"What are you doing in this tavern?"

"And you?"

"I do not know."

"Nor I."

"You come here, then?"

"Under orders."

"That is my case."

"And you are waiting?"

"For a man who is coming."

"With a watchword?"

"And on this watchword?"

"I am to obey as though it were Tapin himself."

"Just so; and, in the mean time, I have a pistole for drink."

"I have a pistole also, but I was not told to drink."

"And it being doubtful?"

"In doubt, as the sage says, I do not abstain."

"In that case, let us drink."

And he raised his hand to call the landlord, but it was not necessary, for he was standing near, expecting orders.

"Some wine," cried the two guards.

"Orléans," added one; "I like that."

The landlord brought an enclosed bottle.

The two drinkers filled their glasses, emptied them, and

then placed them on the table, each with a different grimace, but both intended to express the same opinion.

When the host was gone, one said to the other, —

“You know more of this than you have told me?”

“I know it concerns a certain captain,” answered the other.

“Yes; just so. But I suppose we shall have aid to arrest him.”

“Doubtless; two to one is not enough.”

“You forget the man with the watchword.”

“Ah! I think I hear something.”

“Yes; some one coming down stairs.”

“Chut!”

“Silence!”

And the soldiers, much more occupied by their commission than if they had really been soldiers, kept an eye turned towards the staircase while they drank.

They were not deceived; the step on the staircase approached, and they saw, first, some legs, then a body, then a head descending. The legs were covered with fine silk stockings and white cashmere breeches, the body with a tight blue coat, and the head with a three-cornered hat, jauntily placed over one ear; his epaulettes left no doubt that he held the rank of captain.

This man, who was in fact Captain La Jonquière, was about five feet five, rather fat, and had a sagacious air; one would almost have supposed that he suspected spies in the two soldiers, for he turned his back to them at once, and entered into conversation with his host in a somewhat assumed tone and manner.

“In truth,” said he, “I should have dined here, and this delicious perfume of stewed kidneys would have tempted me, but some *bons vivants* are expecting me at the Galoubet de Paphos. Perhaps a young man may come here this morning, but I could not wait any longer. Should he ask for a hundred pistoles, say that I shall be back in an hour, if he will wait.”

"Very well, captain," said the host.

"Some wine," said the guard.

"Ah," said the captain, throwing an apparently careless glance at the drinkers, "here are some soldiers who have but little respect for an epaulette." Then, turning to the host, —

"Serve these gentlemen ; you see they are in a hurry."

"Ah," said one, rising, "as soon as monsieur will permit."

"Certainly I permit it," said La Jonquière ; and he stepped towards the door.

"But, captain," said the host, stopping him, "you have not told me the name of the gentleman you expect."

La Jonquière hesitated. After a moment, —

"Monsieur Gaston de Chanlay," he replied.

"Gaston de Chanlay," repeated the host. "I hope I shall remember the name. Gaston, — Gascon ; ah, I shall remember Gascon. Chanlay ; ah, I shall think of Chandelle."

"That is it," repeated La Jonquière, gravely ; "Gascon de Chandelle."

And he went out, but not without looking round the corners of the street and the angles of the houses.

He had not taken a hundred steps in the Rue St. Honoré before Dubois presented himself at the door. He had passed La Jonquière, but, never having seen him, could not recognise him.

He presented himself boldly, dressed as a shopkeeper.

CHAPTER XIII.

MONSIEUR MOUTONNET, DRAPER AT ST. GERMAIN-EN-LAYE.

DUBOIS at once accosted the host.

"Monsieur," said he timidly, "does Captain La Jonquière lodge here? I wish to speak to him."

"You wish to speak to him?" said the host, examining the new-comer from head to foot.

"If possible," said Dubois.

"Are you sure that is the person you want?" asked the host, who did not think this was the man La Jonquière expected.

"I think so," said Dubois modestly.

"A short, fat man?"

"Yes."

"Drinks his brandy neat?"

"That is the man."

"Always ready with his cane if he is not attended to directly?"

"Ah, that is Captain La Jonquière!"

"You know him, then?"

"Not in the least," said Dubois.

"True, for you must have met him at the door."

"Diable! Is he out?" said Dubois, with a start of ill-humour badly repressed. "Thank you," and he called up an amiable smile.

"He has not been gone five minutes."

"But he is coming back?"

"In an hour."

"May I wait for him, monsieur?"

"Certainly, if you take something."

"Give me some brandy cherries," said Dubois. "I never drink wine except with meals."

The two guards exchanged a contemptuous smile.

The host hastened to bring the cherries.

"Ah!" said Dubois; "only five! At St. Germain-en-Laye they give six."

"Possibly, monsieur; for at St. Germain-en-Laye they have no excise to pay."

"Yes, I forgot that," and he began to eat a cherry, which he could not, however, accomplish without a grimace.

"Where does the captain lodge?" asked Dubois.

"There is the door of his room; he preferred the ground floor."

"Yes," murmured Dubois; "the windows look into the public road."

"And there is a door opening into the Rue des Deux Boules."

"Oh, how convenient! And does not the noise annoy him?"

"There is another room above: sometimes he sleeps in one, sometimes in the other."

"Like Denis the tyrant," said Dubois, who could not refrain from Latin or historical quotations.

"What?" said mine host.

Dubois bit his lip. At this moment one of the soldiers called for wine, and the host darted off to wait upon him.

Dubois turned to the two guards.

"Thank you," said he.

"What is it, bourgeois?" asked they.

"France and the regent," replied Dubois.

"The watchword!" cried both, rising.

"Enter this room," said Dubois, showing La Jonquière's room. "Open the door into the Rue des Deux Boules, and hide behind a curtain, under a table, in a closet, wherever you can. If, when I come in, I can see so much as an ear, you will have no pay for six months."

The two men emptied their glasses, and entered the room, while Dubois, who saw they had forgotten to pay, put a piece of twelve sous on the table, then, opening the window, and calling to the driver of a hackney carriage standing before the door, —

“L'Eveill  ,” said he, “bring the carriage to the little door in the Rue des Deux Boules, and tell Tapin to come up when I knock on the window with my fingers. He has his orders; be off.”

The host reappeared.

“Hola!” cried he, “where are my men?”

“A sergeant came and called them away.”

“But they have not paid.”

“Yes, they left a twelve-sou piece on the table.”

“Diable! twelve sous; and my wine is eight sous the bottle.”

“Ah!” said Dubois, “no doubt they thought that as they were soldiers you would make a reduction.”

“At any rate,” said the host, consoling himself, “it is not all lost; and in our trade one must expect this kind of thing.”

“You have nothing of the sort to fear with Captain La Jonqu  re?”

“Oh, no, he is the best of lodgers; he pays without a word, and ready money. True, he never likes anything.”

“Oh, that may be his manner,” said Dubois.

“Exactly.”

“What you tell me of his prompt payment pleases me.”

“Have you come to ask for money? He said he expected some one to whom he owed a hundred pistoles.”

“No; on the contrary, I owe him fifty louis.”

“Fifty louis! Peste!” said the host, “what a pretty sum! Perhaps I was mistaken, and he said receive, not pay. Are you the Chevalier Gaston de Chanlay?”

“Does he expect the Chevalier Gaston de Chanlay?” said Dubois, with a joy he could not conceal.

"He told me so," said the host. "Is that you?"

"No; I am not noble. I am called Moutonnet."

"Nobility is nothing," said the host. "One may be called Moutonnet and be an honest man."

"Yes; Moutonnet, draper at St. Germain-en-Laye."

"And you have fifty louis for the captain?"

"Yes. In turning over some old accounts of my father's, I find he owed fifty louis to Captain La Jonquière's father, and I have had no peace till, instead of the father, who is dead, I had found the son."

"Do you know there are not many debtors like you?"

"The Moutonnets are all the same, from father to son. When we are owed anything we are pitiless. Listen. There is an honest fellow who owed Moutonnet and Son one hundred and sixty francs; my grandfather put him in prison, and there he has been for the three generations, and he has just died there. I calculated that, during the thirty years he was there, he cost us twelve thousand francs; but we maintained the principle. But I beg your pardon for keeping you with all this nonsense; and here is a new customer for you."

"Ah!" said the host, "it is Captain La Jonquière himself. Captain," continued he, "some one is waiting for you."

The captain entered suspiciously,—he had seen some strange, and he thought sinister, faces about.

Dubois saluted him politely.

La Jonquière asked the host if the friend he had expected had arrived.

"No one but monsieur. However, you lose nothing by the exchange, since one was to fetch away money, and the other brings it."

La Jonquière, surprised, turned to Dubois, who repeated the same story he had told to the host, and with such success that La Jonquière, calling for wine, asked Dubois to follow him into his room.

Dubois approached the window, and quietly tapped on it with his fingers.

"But shall I not be in the way in your room?" asked Dubois.

"Not at all, — not at all. The view is pleasant; as we drink we can look out and see the passers by; and there are some pretty women in the Rue des Bourdonnais."

They entered the room. Dubois made a sign to Tapin, who appeared in the first room, followed by two men, then shut the door behind him.

Tapin's two followers went to the window of the common room, and drew the curtains, while Tapin placed himself behind the door of Jonquière's room, so as to be hidden by it when it opened. The host now returned from La Jonquière's room, to write down the receipt for the money which La Jonquière had just paid him for the wine, when Tapin threw a handkerchief over his mouth, and carried him off like a feather to a second carriage standing at the door. One of the men seized the little girl who was cooking eggs, the other carried off the servant, and soon they were all on the way to St. Lazare, drawn by two such good horses that it was evidently not a real hired car.

Tapin remained behind, and taking from a closet a calico apron and waistcoat, signed to a loiterer who was looking in at the window, and who quickly transformed himself into a publican.

At this moment a violent noise was heard in the captain's room, as of a table thrown down with bottles and glasses; then oaths, then the clinking of a sword, then silence.

Presently a carriage was heard rolling away up the Rue de Deux Boules. Tapin looked joyous.

"Bravo!" said he, "that is done."

"It was time, masters," said the pretended publican, 'for here is a customer."

CHAPTER XIV.

TRUST TO SIGNS OF GRATITUDE.

TAPIN at first thought that it was the Chevalier de Chanlay, but it was only a woman who wanted a pint of wine.

"What has happened to poor M. Bourguignon?" asked she. "He has just been taken away in a coach."

"Alas!" said Tapin, "we were far from expecting it. He was standing there talking, and was suddenly seized with apoplexy."

"Gracious heavens!"

"We are all mortal," said Tapin, throwing up his eyes.

"But why did they take the little girl?"

"To attend to her father, — it is her duty."

"But the servant?"

"To cook for them."

"Ah, I could not understand it all, so I came to buy a pint of wine, though I did not want it, that I might find out."

"Well, now you know."

"Yes, but who are you?"

"I am Champagne, Bourguignon's cousin. I arrived by chance this morning; I brought him news of his family, and the sudden joy overcame him. Ask Grabigeon," continued Tapin, showing his assistant, who was finishing an omelet commenced by the landlord's daughter.

"Oh, yes, everything passed exactly as M. Champagne says," replied Grabigeon, wiping away a tear with the handle of his spoon.

"Poor M. Bourguignon ! then you think that we should pray for him ?"

"There is never any harm in praying," said Tapin, sentimentously.

"Ah, stop a minute ; give me good measure."

Monsieur Bourguignon would have groaned in spirit could he have seen the wine that Tapin gave for her two sous.

"Well," said she, "I will go and tell the neighbours, who are very anxious, and I promise you my custom, M. Champagne ; indeed, if M. Bourguignon were not your cousin, I would tell you what I think."

"Oh, tell me, never mind that."

"I perceive that he cheated me shamefully. What you have given me for two sous, he would hardly have given me for four ; but if there is no justice here there is in heaven, and it is very providential that you are to continue his business."

"I believe so," said Tapin, in a half voice, " particularly for his customers."

And he dismissed the woman just as the door opened, and a young man entered, dressed in a blue cloak.

"Is this the hotel Le Muids d'Amour ?" asked he.

"Yes, monsieur."

"Does Captain La Jonquière lodge here ?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"Is he within ?"

"Yes, he has just returned."

"Tell him, if you please, that the Chevalier Gaston de Chanlay is here."

Tapin offered the chevalier a chair, and went into La Jonquière's room.

Gaston shook the snow from his boots and cloak, and proceeded leisurely to examine the pictures on the wall, never supposing that he had close to him three or four swords, which, at a sign from the polite host, would leave their sheaths to be plunged into his breast.

Tapin returned, saying, "Captain La Jonquière waits for M. de Chanlay."

Gaston proceeded to the room where sat a man whom the host pointed out as Captain La Jonquière, and — without being much of a physiognomist — he perceived at once that he was no bully.

Little, dry, gray-eyed, uneasy in his uniform, such appeared the formidable captain whom Gaston had been recommended to treat with so much consideration.

"This man is ugly, and looks like a sexton," thought Gaston; then, as the stranger advanced towards him, —

"Have I the honour of speaking to Captain La Jonquière?" asked Gaston.

"Himself," said Dubois; "and are you M. le Chevalier Gaston de Chanlay?"

"I am, monsieur."

"Have you the sign of recognition?" asked the false La Jonquière.

"Here is the half of the gold piece."

"And here the other," said Dubois.

They tried the two, which fitted exactly.

"And now," said Gaston, "the papers;" and he drew from his pocket the strangely folded paper on which was written the name of La Jonquière.

Dubois took from his pocket a similar paper, bearing Gaston's name; they were precisely alike.

"Now," said Gaston, "the pocket-book."

They found that their pocket-books were precisely similar, and both, though new, contained an almanac for the year 1700, nineteen years previous.

"And now, monsieur," said Gaston.

"Now we will talk of business: is not that your meaning, chevalier?"

"Exactly; are we safe?"

"As though in a desert."

They seated themselves by a table, on which were a bottle of sherry and two glasses.

Dubois filled one, and was about to fill the other, when Gaston stopped him.

"Peste!" thought Dubois, "he is slender and sober, bad signs; Cæsar mistrusted thin people who did not drink, and Brutus and Cassius were such."

"Captain," said Gaston, after a short silence, "when we undertake, as now, an affair in which we risk our heads, I think we should know each other, so that the past may vouch for the future. Montlouis, Talhouet, Du Couëdic, and Pontcalec have told you my name and condition. I was brought up by a brother, who had reasons for personal hatred to the regent. This hatred I have imbibed; therefore, three years ago, when the league was formed among the nobility in Bretagne, I entered the conspiracy; now I have been chosen to come to Paris to receive the instructions of Baron de Valef, who has arrived from Spain, to transmit them to the Duc d'Olivares, his Catholic Majesty's agent in Paris, and to assure myself of his assent."

"And what is Captain La Jonquière to do in all this?" asked Dubois, as though he were doubting the chevalier's identity.

"To present me to the Duc d'Olivares. I arrived two hours ago; since then I have seen M. de Valef, and now I come to you. Now you know my history."

Dubois listened, and, when Gaston had finished, —

"As to me, chevalier," said he, throwing himself back indolently in his chair, "I must own my history is somewhat longer and more adventurous; however, if you wish to hear it, I obey."

"I think it necessary, in our position, to know each other," said Gaston.

"Well," said Dubois, "as you know, I am called Captain La Jonquière; my father was, like myself, a soldier of fortune; this is a trade at which one gains in general a good deal of glory and very little money; my glorious father died, leaving me, for sole inheritance, his rapier and his

uniform; I girded on the rapier, which was rather too long, and I wore the uniform, which was rather too large. From that time," said Dubois, calling the chevalier's attention to the looseness of his coat, "from that time I contracted the habit of always having plenty of room to move easily."

Gaston nodded, as though to express his approbation of this habit.

"Thanks to my good looks, I was received in the Royal Italian, which was then recruiting in France. I held a distinguished post; when — the day before the battle of Malplaquet — I had a slight quarrel with my sergeant about an order which he gave me with the end of his cane raised instead of lowered, as it should have been."

"Pardon me," said Gaston, "but I cannot see what difference that could make to the order he was giving."

"It made this difference, that in lowering his cane it struck against my hat, which fell to the ground; the result was a duel, in which I passed my sabre through his body. Now, as I certainly should have been shot if I had waited to be arrested, I made off, and woke the next morning — devil take me if I know how it happened — in Marlborough's army."

"That is to say you deserted," said Gaston, smiling.

"I had Coriolanus and the great Condé for examples," said Dubois, "and this appeared to me to be sufficient to excuse me in the eyes of posterity. I assisted then, I must tell you, as we are to hide nothing from one another, at the battle of Malplaquet; but instead of being on one side of the brook, I was on the other, and instead of having the village behind me, I faced it. I think this was a lucky exchange for your humble servant; the Royal Italian left eight hundred men on the field of battle, my company was cut to pieces, and my own comrade and bedfellow killed by a cannon-ball. The glory with which my late regiment covered itself so much delighted Marlborough, that he made me an ensign on the field of battle. With such a

protector I ought to have done well, but his wife, Lady Marlborough, whom Heaven confound, having been awkward enough to spill a bowl of water over Queen Anne's dress, this great event changed the face of things in Europe. In the overthrow which resulted, I found myself without any other protector than my own merit, and the enemies I had gained thereby."

"And what did you do then?" asked Gaston, somewhat interested in the adventurous life of the pretended captain.

"What could I do? I was forced to enter the service of his Catholic Majesty, who, to his honour be it said, graciously acceded to my demand for a commission. In three years I was a captain; but out of our pay of thirty reals a day they kept back twenty, telling us what an honour it was for us to lend money to the King of Spain. As the security did not appear good in my eyes, I asked leave of my colonel to quit the service and return to my beautiful country, accompanied by a recommendation, in order that the Malplaquet affair might not be too much brought on the *tapis*. The colonel referred me to the Prince de Cellamare, who, recognising in me a natural disposition to obey, without discussion, any orders given in a proper manner and accompanied by a certain music, employed me actively in the famous conspiracy which bears his name, when, all at once, the whole affair blew up, as you know, by the double denunciation of La Fillon and a wretched writer called Buvat; but his highness, wisely thinking that what is deferred is not lost, recommended me to his successor, to whom I hope my services may be useful, and whom I thank most heartily for procuring me the acquaintance of so accomplished a cavalier as yourself. Count on me, then, chevalier, as your most humble and obedient servant."

"I ask nothing of you, captain," replied Gaston, "but to present me to the duke, the only person to whom my instructions permit me to speak openly, and to whom I am

to deliver the Baron de Valef's despatches. I beg, therefore, that you will present me to his excellency."

"This very day, chevalier," said Dubois, who seemed to have decided on his course of action; "in an hour if you like, in ten minutes if necessary."

"As soon as possible."

"Listen," said Dubois; "I was a little too quick when I said you should see his excellency in an hour, — in Paris one is never sure; perhaps he does not know of your coming, and I may not find him at home."

"I understand."

"Perhaps even I may be prevented from coming back to fetch you."

"How so?"

"Peste, chevalier; it is easy to see that this is your first visit to Paris."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that in Paris there are three distinct bodies of police, who all unite to torment those honest people who only desire to substitute what is not for what is. First, the regent's police, which is not much to be feared; secondly, that of Messire Voyer d'Argenson, — this has its days, when he is in a bad humour, or has been ill received at the convent of the Madeleine du Tresnel; thirdly, there is Dubois's police; ah! that is a different thing. Dubois is a —"

"A wretch!" cried Gaston; "I am well aware of that." Dubois smiled his sinister smile.

"Well, to escape these three police?" said Gaston.

"One must be prudent, chevalier."

"Instruct me, captain; for you seem to know more about it than I, who am a provincial."

"Firstly, we must not lodge in the same hotel."

"Diable!" said Gaston, who remembered the address given to Hélène; "I had a great wish to remain here."

"I will be the one to turn out then, chevalier. Take one of my rooms, — this one, or the one above."

"I prefer this."

"You are right; on the ground floor, a window looking into one street, a secret door to the other. You have a quick eye; we shall make something of you."

"Let us return to our business."

"Right; where was I?"

"You said you might not be able to come back and fetch me."

"Yes, but in that case take care not to follow any one without sufficient signs."

"By what sign shall I recognise any one as coming from you?"

"First, he must have a letter from me."

"I do not know your writing."

"True; I will give you a specimen."

And Dubois wrote the following lines: —

"MONSIEUR LE CHEVALIER, —

"Follow without fear the man who brings this note; he is deputed by me to lead you to the house where the Duc d'Olivares and Captain La Jonquière await you."

"Stay," said he, giving him the note, "if any one comes in my name, he will give you a similar letter."

"Is that enough?"

"One cannot be too careful; besides the letter, he will show you the half-coin, and at the door of the house to which he leads you, ask for the third sign."

"Which will be —"

"The paper."

"It is well," said Gaston, "with these precautions, the devil is in it if we are mistaken. Now, what am I to do?"

"Wait; you will not go out to-day."

"No."

"Well, remain quiet in this hotel, where you will wait for nothing. I will recommend you to the host."

"Thanks."

"My dear M. Champagne," said Dubois to Tapin, opening the door, "the Chevalier de Chanlay takes my room; attend to him as you would to me."

Then, closing it, —

· "That fellow is worth his weight in gold, Tapin," said he in a low voice, "do not lose sight of him for a moment; you will answer for him with your head."

CHAPTER XV.

HIS EXCELLENCY THE DUC D'ORLÉANS.

DUBOIS, on leaving the chevalier, contemplated the chance which had again placed in his hands the future of the regent and of France. In crossing the hall he recognised L'Eveill  , and signed to him to follow. It was L'Eveill  , who had undertaken to get the real La Jonqu  re out of the way. Dubois became thoughtful: the easiest part of the affair was done; it now remained to persuade the regent to put himself in a kind of affair which he held in the utmost horror, — the man  uvring of intrigue.

Dubois began by asking where the regent was, and how occupied? The prince was in his studio, finishing an etching commenced by Hubert, the chemist, who, at an adjoining table, was occupied in embalming an ibis, by the Egyptian method, which he professed to have recovered.

A secretary was reading some letters to the regent.

All at once, to the regent's astonishment — for this was his sanctum — the door opened, and an usher announced Captain La Jonqu  re.

The regent turned.

"La Jonqu  re?" said he; "who is this?"

Hubert looked surprised that a stranger should be thus unceremoniously intruded on their privacy.

At this moment a long pointed head appeared at the open door.

The regent did not at first recognise Dubois in his disguise: but shortly the pointed nose, which had not its match in the kingdom, betrayed him.

A merry look took the place of the astonishment which the regent's features had at first displayed.

"Ah, it is you, abbé!" said his highness, laughing, "and what is the meaning of this disguise?"

"It means that I have changed my skin, and from a fox have turned into a lion; and now, Monsieur the Chemist and Monsieur the Secretary, do me the favour to take your bird and letters elsewhere."

"Why so?" asked the regent.

"Because I have important business to speak of with you."

"Go to the devil with your important business; it is too late: come to-morrow."

"Monseigneur," said Dubois, "do not force me to remain till to-morrow in this villainous disguise."

"Do what you please, but I have decided that the rest of this day shall be given to pleasure."

"Well, I come to propose a disguise to you also."

"A disguise! what do you mean, Dubois?" asked the regent, who thought it was probably one of his ordinary masquerades.

"Ah, it makes your mouth water, Monsieur Alain."

"Speak; what do you want to do?"

"First send away your chemist and secretary."

"You still wish it?"

"Decidedly."

"Very well, then."

The regent signed to them to leave: they did so.

"And now," said he, "what is it?"

"I want to present to you, monseigneur, a young man, a very delightful fellow, just arrived from Bretagne, and strongly recommended to me."

"His name?"

"The Chevalier Gaston de Chanlay."

"De Chanlay!" said the regent, "the name is not unknown to me."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, I think I have heard it formerly; but I do not remember where or how. What does your *protégé* come to Paris for?"

"Monseigneur, I shall leave him to tell you that himself."

"Tell it to me?"

"Yes; that is to say, to the Duc d'Olivares, whom you are about to personate. Ah, my *protégé* is a discreet conspirator, and I have had some trouble to get at the truth of things. He was addressed to Paris, to a certain La Jonquière, who was to present him to the Duc d'Olivares. Do you understand now?"

"Not at all."

"Well, I have been Captain La Jonquière, but I cannot be both La Jonquière and his excellency."

"So you reserve that part —"

"For you, monseigneur."

"Thank you. So you think that, under a false name, I will get at the secrets —"

"Of your enemies, monseigneur," interrupted Dubois. "Pardieu! what a dreadful crime, and how it would distress you, to change name and dress; you have never before learned secrets by such means. But remember, monseigneur, our many disguises, and after being called M. Alain and Maître Jean you may well, I think, without anything derogatory to your dignity, be called Le Duc d'Olivares."

"I ask no better than a disguise for amusement, but —"

"But a disguise," continued Dubois, "to preserve the peace of France, to prevent traitors from overthrowing the kingdom, to prevent assassins from murdering you, — this, I suppose, is unworthy of you. I understand; ah, if it were only in pursuit of some little ironmongress in the Pont-Neuf, or the pretty widow of the Rue Saint Augustine, it might be worth your while."

"If I do what you wish," said the regent, "what will be the result?"

"Probably, that you will own that I am no visionary, and that you will allow others to watch over you, since you will not watch over yourself."

"But, once for all, if the thing turns out not worth the trouble, shall I be freed from your worrying?"

"I promise you, on my honour."

"Abbé, if you have no objection, I should prefer another oath."

"Oh, monseigneur, you are too hard; but you consent?"

"Again this folly."

"You shall see if it be folly."

"I believe you make plots to frighten me."

"Then they are well made; you shall see."

"Are you certain?"

"Absolutely."

"If I am not frightened, look to yourself."

"Monseigneur exacts too much."

"You are not sure, Dubois."

"I swear to you, monsieur, that you will be moved, and will be glad to speak with his excellency's tongue."

And Dubois went out before the regent had time to withdraw his consent.

Five minutes after, a courier entered the ante-chamber, and gave a letter to a page, who brought it to the regent.

"Madame Desroches," said he, looking at the writing, and, breaking the seal, read as follows:—

"MONSEIGNEUR, —

"The young lady you left in my charge does not appear to be in safety here."

"Bah!" cried the regent, and then read on, —

"The residence in the town, which your highness feared for her, would be a hundred times better than isolation; and I do not feel strong enough to defend her as I would wish, and as I ought."

"Ouais!" said the regent, "it seems something is the matter."

"A young man, who had written to Mademoiselle Hélène shortly before your arrival yesterday, presented himself this morning at the pavilion; I wished to refuse him ad-

mittance, but mademoiselle so peremptorily ordered me to admit him, and to retire, that in her look and tone I recognized the blood which commands."

"Yes, yes," said the regent, "she is indeed my daughter; but who can this young man be? Some coxcomb she must have seen in the convent parlour." Then he read on:—

"I believe, monseigneur, that this young man and mademoiselle have met before. I did not think it wrong to listen, for your highness' service, and in spite of the double door I once heard him say, 'To see you as formerly.' Will your royal highness secure me against this danger, and send me a written order which I can use to shelter myself from the anger of mademoiselle."

"Diable!" exclaimed the regent, "it cannot be a love affair already; brought up in the only convent in France where men never pass the parlour. No, it is some foolish fear of Madame Desroches; but let us see what else she writes."

"P. S. I have just been to the hotel Tigre Royal for information. The young man arrived yesterday evening at seven o'clock, just three quarters of an hour before mademoiselle; he came by the Bretagne road, that is, the road she also came. He travels under the name of M. de Livry."

"Oh!" said the regent, "this looks like a concerted plan. Pardieu! Dubois would laugh if he knew this; how he would talk! It is to be hoped he knows nothing of it, in spite of his police. Hola! page."

The page who had brought the letter entered.

"Where is the messenger from Rambouillet?"

"He is waiting for an answer."

"Give him this, and tell him to start at once."

As to Dubois, while preparing the interview between

Gaston and the false duke, he made the following calculation.

"I hold the regent both by himself and his daughter. This intrigue of his is either serious or not; if it be not, I distress her in exaggerating it. If it be serious, I have the merit of having discovered it; but I must not strike both blows at once. First, I must save the duke, then his daughter, and there will be two rewards. Is that the best? Yes, the duke first; if a young girl falls, no one suffers, if a man falls, a kingdom is lost, let us begin with the duke." And Dubois despatched a courier to M. de Montaran at Nantes.

M. de Montaran was, as we have said, the ancient Governor of Bretagne.

As to Gaston, his plan was fixed. Ashamed of being associated with a man like Jonquière, he congratulated himself that he was now to communicate with the chief of the enterprise, and resolved, if he also appeared base and venial, to return and take counsel with his friends at Nantes. As to Hélène he doubted not; he knew her courage and her love, and that she would die rather than have to blush before her dearest friend. He saw with joy that the happiness of finding a father did not lead her to forget the past, but still he had his fears as to this mysterious paternity; even a king would own such a daughter, were there not some disgraceful obstacle.

Gaston dressed himself carefully; there is a coquetry in danger as well as in pleasure, and he embellished his youth with every advantage of costume.

The regent, by Dubois's advice, dressed in black velvet and half hid his face in an immense cravat of Mechlin lace.

The interview was to take place in a house belonging to the regent, in the Faubourg Saint Germain: he arrived there at five o'clock, as night was falling.

CHAPTER XVI.

MONSEIGNEUR, WE ARE BRETONS.

GASTON remained in the room on the ground floor, and dressed himself carefully, as we have said, while Tapin continued his apprenticeship. By the evening he knew how to measure a pint as well as his predecessor, and even better; for he thought that in the compensation which would be given to Bourguignon waste would be considered, and that therefore the less waste the better; so the morning's customer on her return got badly served, and went off disgusted.

When his toilet was finished, Gaston began to inspect La Jonquière's library, and found it composed of three sets of books; theatrical books, obscene books, and arithmetical books.

While he was thus engaged a man entered, introduced by Tapin, who went out directly, and left him alone with Gaston. The man announced that Captain La Jonquière, not being able to return, had sent him in his stead. Gaston demanding proof, the man showed a letter in the same terms and the same writing as the specimen Gaston had received, and then the half-coin, after which Gaston made no difficulty as to following him, and both got into a carefully closed carriage. They crossed the Pont-Neuf, and, in the Rue du Bac, stopped at the courtyard of a pavilion; then the man drew from his pocket the paper bearing the chevalier's name as the third signal of recognition.

Gaston and his companion alighted, ascended the four steps of the doorway, and entered a large circular corridor

surrounding the pavilion. Gaston looked round and saw that his guide had disappeared, and that he was alone.

His heart beat quickly. He was about to face, not the tool, but the master and originator of the whole plot, the representative of a king; he was to play a kingdom against a kingdom.

A bell sounded within.

Gaston almost trembled. He looked in a glass and saw that he was pale; a thousand new ideas assailed him; the door opened, and La Jonquière appeared.

"Come, chevalier," said he, "we are expected."

Gaston advanced with a firm step.

They found a man seated in an arm-chair, his back turned to the door. A single light, placed on a table and covered with a shade, lighted only the lower part of his body; his head and shoulders were in shadow.

Gaston thought the face noble, and understood at once that this was a man of worth, and no La Jonquière. The mouth was benevolent and the eyes large, bold, and firm, like those of a king or a bird of prey; deep thought was written on his brow, prudence and some degree of firmness in the lower part of the face; all this, however, in the half-darkness, and in spite of the Mechlin cravat.

"At least this is an eagle," thought he, "the other was but a raven."

Gaston bowed silently, and the unknown, rising, went and leant against the chimney.

"Monsieur is the person of whom I spoke to your excellency," said La Jonquière, "M. le Chevalier Gaston de Chanlay."

The unknown bowed silently.

"Mordieu!" whispered Dubois in his ear, "if you do not speak he will not say anything."

"This gentleman comes from Bretagne, I believe," said the duke, coldly.

"Yes, monsieur; but will your excellency pardon me. Captain La Jonquière has told my name, but I have not

been told yours. Excuse my rudeness, monseigneur; it is not I who speak, it is my province, which sends me."

"You are right, Monsieur," said La Jonquière, quickly, taking from a portfolio on the table a paper, at the bottom of which was a large signature with the seal of the King of Spain.

"Here is the name," said he.

"Duc d'Olivares," read Gaston.

Then turning to him, he bowed respectfully.

"And now, Monsieur," said the duke, "you will not, I presume, hesitate to speak."

"I thought I had first to listen," said Gaston, still on the defensive.

"True: but, remember, it is a dialogue; each one speaks in turn."

"Monseigneur, you do me too much honour, and I will set the example of confidence."

"I listen, monsieur."

"Monseigneur, the states of Bretagne —"

"The malcontents of Bretagne," interrupted the regent, smiling, in spite of a sign from Dubois.

"The malcontents are so numerous," replied Gaston, "that they may be considered the representatives of the province: however, I will employ the word your excellency points out; the malcontents of Bretagne have sent me to you, monseigneur, to learn the intentions of Spain in this affair."

"First let us learn those of Bretagne."

"Monseigneur, Spain may count on us; we pledge our word, and Breton loyalty is proverbial."

"But what do you promise?"

"To second the efforts of the French nobility."

"But are you not French?"

"Monseigneur, we are Bretons. Bretagne, reunited to France by a treaty, may look on herself as separated from the moment when France no longer respects the rights of that treaty."

"Yes, I know; the old story of Anne de Bretagne's contract. It is a long time since that contract was signed, monsieur."

The false La Jonquière pushed the regent violently.

"What matter," said Gaston, "if each one of us has it by heart?"

CHAPTER XVII.

MONSIEUR ANDRÉ.

"You said that the Breton nobility were ready to second the French nobility: now, what do the French nobility want?"

"They desire, in case of his Majesty's death, to place the King of Spain on the throne of France, as sole heir of Louis XIV."

"Very good, very good," said La Jonquière, taking snuff with an air of extreme satisfaction.

"But," said the regent, "the king is not dead, although you speak almost as if he were."

"The Grand Dauphin, the Duc and Duchesse de Bourgogne, and their children, disappeared in a deplorable manner."

The regent turned pale with anger; Dubois coughed.

"Then they reckon on the king's death?"

"Generally, monseigneur."

"Then that explains how the King of Spain hopes, in spite of the renunciation of his rights, to mount the throne of France. But, amongst the people attached to the regency, he may meet with some opposition."

The false Spaniard involuntarily lingered on these words.

"Monseigneur," replied the chevalier, "this case also has been foreseen."

"Ah!" said Dubois, "this has been foreseen. Did not I tell you, monseigneur, that the Bretons were valuable to us. Continue, monsieur, continue."

In spite of this invitation, Gaston was silent.

"Well, monsieur," said the pretended duke, "I am listening."

"This secret is not mine, monseigneur."

"Then," said the duke, "I have not the confidence of your chiefs?"

"On the contrary, you alone have it."

"I understand, monsieur; but the captain is my friend, and I answer for him as for myself."

"My instructions are, monsieur, to speak to you alone."

"But, I tell you, I answer for the captain."

"In that case," said Gaston, bowing, "I have said all I have to say."

"You hear, captain," said the regent; "have the kindness to leave us alone."

"Yes, monseigneur; I have but two words to say to you."

Gaston drew back.

"Monseigneur," whispered Dubois, "press him hard,—get out the whole affair,—you will never have such another chance. What do you think of our Breton?"

"A noble fellow; eyes full of intelligence and a fine head."

"So much the better for cutting it off."

"What do you say?"

"Nothing, monseigneur; I am exactly of your opinion. M. de Chanlay, your humble servant; some might be angry that you would not speak before them, but I am not proud, and, provided all things turn out as I expect, I do not care for the means."

Chanlay bowed.

"Monsieur," said the regent, when Dubois had closed the door, "we are alone, and I am listening. Speak,—you understand my impatience."

"Yes, monseigneur. You are doubtless surprised that you have not yet received from Spain a certain despatch which you were to send to Cardinal Olocroni?"

"True, monsieur," said the regent, dissembling with difficulty.

"I will explain the delay. The messenger who should

have brought this despatch fell ill, and has not left Madrid. The Baron de Valef, my friend, who was in Spain, offered himself; and, after three or four days' hesitation, at length — as he was a man already tried in Cellamare's conspiracy — they trusted him."

"In fact," said the regent, "the Baron de Valef narrowly escaped Dubois's emissaries; it needed some courage to renew such a work. I know that when the regent saw Madame du Maine and Cellamare arrested, Richelieu, Polignac, Malezieux, and Mademoiselle de Launay in the Bastille, and that wretched Lagrange-Chancel at the Sainte Marguerite, he thought all was finished."

"You see he was mistaken, monseigneur."

"But do not these Breton conspirators fear that in thus rising they may sacrifice the heads of the Paris conspirators whom the regent has in his power?"

"They hope to save them, or die with them."

"How save them?"

"Let us return to the despatch, if you please, monseigneur; here it is."

The regent took the paper, but seeing the address to his excellency the Duc d'Olivares, laid it on the table unopened.

Strange inconsistency! This man opened two hundred letters a day by his spies; it is true that then he dealt with a Torcy or a Dubois, and not with a Chevalier de Chanlay.

"Well, monseigneur," said Gaston.

"You know, doubtless, what this despatch contains, monsieur?"

"Not word for word, perhaps; but I know what was arranged."

"Well, tell me. I shall be glad to know how far you are admitted into the secrets of the Spanish cabinet."

"When the regent is got rid of," said Gaston, without noticing the slight start which his interlocutor gave at these words, "the Duc du Maine will be provisionally recognised in his place. The Duc du Maine will at once break

the treaty of the quadruple alliance signed by that wretch Dubois."

"I wish La Jonquière had been here to hear you speak thus; it would have pleased him. Go on, monsieur."

"The Pretender will start with a fleet for the English shore; Prussia, Sweden, and Russia will then be engaged with Holland; the Empire will profit by this war to retake Naples and Sicily, to which it lays claim through the house of Suabia; the Grand Duchy of Tuscany will be assured to the second son of the King of Spain, the Catholic Low Countries will be reunited to France, Sardinia given to the Duke of Savoy, Commachio to the Pope. France will be the soul of the great league of the south against the north, and, if Louis XV. dies, Philip V. will be crowned king of half the world."

"Yes, I know all that," said the regent, "and this is Celamare's conspiracy renewed. But you used a phrase I did not understand."

"Which, monseigneur?"

"You said, when the regent is got rid of. How is he to be got rid of?"

"The old plan was, as you know, to carry him off to the prison of Saragossa, or the fortress of Toledo."

"Yes; and the plan failed through the duke's watchfulness."

"It was impracticable, — a thousand obstacles opposed it. How was it possible to take such a prisoner across France?"

"It was difficult," said the duke, "I never understood the adoption of such a plan. I am glad to find it modified."

"Monseigneur, it would be possible to seduce guards, to escape from a prison or a fortress, to return to France, retake a lost power, and punish those who had executed this abduction. Philip V. and Alberoni have nothing to fear; his excellency the Duc d'Olivares regains the frontier in safety; and, while half the conspirators escape, the other half pay for all."

"However —"

"Monseigneur, we have the example of the last conspiracy before our eyes, and you yourself named those who are in the Bastille."

"What you say is most logical," replied the duke.

"While, on the contrary, in getting rid of the regent —" continued the chevalier.

"Yes; you prevent his return. It is possible to return from a prison, but not from a tomb,—that is what you would say?"

"Yes, monseigneur," replied Gaston, with a somewhat tremulous voice.

"Now I understand your mission. You come to Paris to make away with the regent?"

"Yes, monseigneur."

"Explain yourself."

"We were five Breton gentlemen, forming a small party or league in the midst of the general association, and it was agreed that the majority should decide on our plans."

"I understand, and the majority decided that the regent should be assassinated."

"Yes, monseigneur, four were for assassination, and one against it."

"And that one?"

"If I lose your excellency's confidence, I must own that I was that one."

"But, then, why are you to accomplish a design you disapprove?"

"Chance was to decide the one who should strike the blow."

"And the lot?"

"Fell on me, monseigneur."

"Why did you not refuse?"

"The ballot was without names, no one knew my vote. I should have been taken for a coward."

"And you came to Paris?"

"For the task imposed on me."

"Reckoning on me?"

"As on an enemy of the regent, for aid in accomplishing an enterprise which not only concerns the interests of Spain, but which will save our friends from the Bastille."

"Do they run as much danger as you believe?"

"Death hovers over them; the regent has proofs, and has said of M. de Richelieu that if he had four heads he has wherewith to condemn them all."

"He said that in a moment of passion."

"What, monseigneur, you defend the duke — you tremble when a man devotes himself to save, not only his accomplices, but two kingdoms — you hesitate to accept that devotion."

"If you fail!"

"Everything has its good and evil side; if the happiness of being the saviour of a country is lost, the honour of being a martyr to its cause is gained."

"But remember, in facilitating your access to the regent, I become your accomplice."

"Does that frighten you, monseigneur?"

"Certainly, for you being arrested —"

"Well, — I being arrested?"

"They may force from you, by means of tortures, the names of those —"

Gaston's reply was a smile of supreme disdain.

"You are a foreigner and a Spaniard, monseigneur," said he, "and do not know what a French gentleman is, therefore I pardon you."

"Then I may reckon on your silence."

"Pontcalec, Du Couëdic, Talhouet, and Montlouis, doubted me for an instant, and have since apologised to me for doing so."

"Well, monsieur, I will think seriously of what you have said, but in your place —"

"In my place?"

"I would renounce this enterprise."

"I wish I had never entered into it, monseigneur, I own, for since I did so a great change has taken place in my life, but I am in it and must accomplish it."

“Even if I refuse to second you?”

“The Breton committee have provided for that emergency.”

“And decided —”

“To do without you.”

“Then your resolution —”

“Is irrevocable.”

“I have said all I had to say,” replied the regent, “since you are determined to pursue your undertaking.”

“Monseigneur,” said Gaston, “you seem to wish to retire.”

“Have you anything more to say to me?”

“Not to-day; to-morrow, or the day after.”

“You have the captain as go-between,—when he gives me notice, I will receive you with pleasure.”

“Monseigneur,” said Gaston firmly, and with a noble air, “let me speak freely. We should have no go-between; you and I—so evidently separated by rank and station—are equal before the scaffold which threatens us. I have even a superiority over you, since I run the greater danger; however, you are now, monseigneur, a conspirator, like the Chevalier de Chanlay, with this difference: that you have the right, being the chief, to see his head fall before yours. Let me, then, treat as an equal with your excellency, and see you when it is necessary.”

The regent thought for a moment.

“Very well,” said he, “this house is not my residence; you understand I do not receive many at my house: since the war, my position is precarious and delicate in France; Cellamare is in prison at Blois; I am only a sort of consul, good as a hostage; I cannot use too many precautions.”

The regent lied with a painful effort.

“Write, then, *poste restante*, to M. André, you must name the time at which you wish to see me, and I will be there.”

“Through the post?” asked Gaston.

“Yes, it is only a delay of three hours; at each post a man will watch for your letter, and bring it to me when it arrives; three hours after you can come here.”

"Your excellency forgets," said Gaston, laughing, "that I do not know where I am, in what street, at what number; I came by night. Stay, let us do better than that; you asked for time to reflect, take till to-morrow morning, and at eleven o'clock send for me. We must arrange a plan beforehand, that it may not fail, like those plans where a carriage or a shower of rain disconcerts everything."

"That is a good idea," said the regent; "to-morrow, then, at eleven o'clock, you shall be fetched, and we will then have no secrets from each other."

Gaston bowed and retired. In the antechamber he found the guide who brought him, but he noticed that in leaving they crossed a garden which they had not passed through on entering, and went out by a different door. At this door the carriage waited, and it quickly arrived at the Rue des Bourdonnais.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE FAUBOURG SAINT ANTOINE.

No more illusion for the chevalier. In a day or two he might be called to his work.

The Spanish envoy had deeply impressed Gaston, — there was about him an air of greatness which surprised him.

A strange circumstance passed across his mind; there was between his forehead and eyes and those of Hélène one of those vague and distant likenesses which seem almost like the incoherence of a dream. Gaston, without knowing why, associated these two faces in his memory, and could not separate them. As he was about to lie down, worn out with fatigue, a horse's feet sounded in the street, the hotel door opened, and Gaston heard an animated conversation; but soon the door was closed, the noise ceased, and he slept as a man sleeps at five-and-twenty, even if he be a conspirator.

However, Gaston was not mistaken; a horse had arrived, and a conversation had taken place. A peasant from Rambouillet brought in haste a note from a young and pretty woman to the Chevalier de Chanlay, Hôtel Muids d'Amour.

We can imagine who the young and pretty woman was.

Tapin took the letter, looked at it, then, taking off his apron, left the charge of the hotel to one of his servants, and went off to Dubois.

"Oh," exclaimed the latter, "let us see; a letter!"

He unsealed it skilfully by aid of steam, and, on reading it, seemed pleased.

"Good! excellent! Let them alone to go their own way; we hold the reins, and can stop them when we like." Then,

turning to Tapin, he gave him the letter, which he had re-sealed. "Here," said he, "deliver the letter."

"When?" asked Tapin.

"At once."

Tapin stepped towards the door.

"No, stop," said Dubois; "to-morrow morning will be soon enough."

"Now," said Tapin, "may I make an observation?"

"Speak."

"As monseigneur's agent, I gain three crowns a day."

"Well, is not that enough, you scoundrel?"

"It was enough as agent. I do not complain, but it is not enough as wine-merchant. Oh, the horrid trade!"

"Drink and amuse yourself."

"Since I have sold wine I hate it."

"Because you see how it is made; but drink champagne, muscat, anything: Bourguignon pays. Apropos, he has had a real attack; so your lie was only an affair of chronology."

"Indeed."

"Yes, fear has caused it; you want to inherit his goods?"

"No, no; the trade is not amusing."

"Well, I will add three crowns a day to your pay while you are there, and I will give the shop to your eldest daughter. Bring me such letters often, and you shall be welcome."

Tapin returned to the hotel, but waited for the morning to deliver the letter.

At six o'clock, hearing Gaston moving, he entered, and gave him the note.

This was what it contained:—

"MY FRIEND, —

"I think of your advice, and that perhaps you were right at last, I fear. A carriage has just arrived—Madame Desroches orders departure—I tried to resist—they shut me up in my room. Fortunately, a peasant passed by to

water his horse; I have given him two louis, and he promised to take you this note. I hear the last preparations, — in two hours we leave for Paris.

“On my arrival I will send you my address, if I have to jump out of the window and bring it.

“Be assured, the woman who loves you will remain worthy of herself and you.”

“Ah, Hélène!” cried Gaston; “I was not deceived. Eight o'clock, but she must have arrived. Why was not this letter brought to me at once?”

“You were asleep, monsieur. I waited your awaking.”

There was no reply to be made. Gaston thought he would go and watch at the barrier, as Hélène might not have arrived. He dressed quickly, and set out, after saying to Tapin, —

“If Captain La Jonquière comes here, say I shall be back at nine.”

While Gaston waits uselessly for Hélène, let us look back.

We saw the regent receive Madame Desroches' letter and send a reply. Indeed, it was necessary to remove Hélène from the attempts of this M. de Livry.

But who could he be? Dubois alone could tell. So when Dubois appeared, —

“Dubois,” said the regent, “who is M. de Livry, of Nantes?”

“Livry, — Livry,” said he. “Stay!”

“Yes, Livry.”

“Who knows such a name? Send for M. d'Hozier.”

“Idiot!”

“But, monseigneur, I do not study genealogies. I am an unworthy plebeian.”

“A truce to this folly.”

“Diable! it seems monseigneur is in earnest about these Livrys. Are you going to give the order to one of them? because, in that case, I will try and find a noble origin.”

"Go to the devil, and send me Nocé."

Dubois smiled, and went out.

Nocé quickly appeared. He was a man about forty, distinguished-looking, tall, handsome, cold and witty, one of the regent's most faithful and favourite friends.

"Monseigneur sent for me?"

"Ah, Nocé, good day."

"Can I serve your royal highness in anything?"

"Yes; lend me your house in the Faubourg Saint Antoine, but empty, and carefully arranged. I will put my own people in it."

"Is it to be for —"

"For a prude, Nocé."

"The houses in the faubourg have a bad name, monseigneur."

"The person for whom I require it does not know that; remember, absolute silence, Nocé, and give me the keys."

"A quarter of an hour, monseigneur, and you shall have them."

"Adieu, Nocé, your hand; no spying, no curiosity, I beg."

"Monseigneur, I am going to hunt, and shall only return at your pleasure."

"Thanks; adieu till to morrow."

The regent sat down and wrote to Madame Desroches, sending a carriage with an order to bring Hélène, after reading her the letter without showing it to her.

The letter was as follows: —

"MY DAUGHTER, —

"On reflection, I wish to have you near me. Therefore follow Madame Desroches without loss of time. On your arrival at Paris, you shall hear from me.

"Your affectionate father."

Hélène resisted, prayed, wept, but was forced to obey. She profited by a moment of solitude to write to Gaston, as

we have seen. Then she left this dwelling which had become dear to her, for there she had found her father and received her lover.

As to Gaston, he waited vainly at the barrier, till, giving up all hope, he returned to the hotel. As he crossed the garden of the Tuileries, eight o'clock struck.

At that moment Dubois entered the regent's bedchamber with a portfolio under his arm, and a triumphant smile on his face.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE ARTIST AND THE POLITICIAN.

"Ah! it is you, Dubois," exclaimed the regent, as his minister entered.

"Yes, monseigneur," said Dubois, taking out some papers.

"Well, what do you say to our Bretons now?"

"What papers are those?" asked the regent, who, in spite of the preceding day's conversation, or perhaps because of it, felt a secret sympathy with De Chanlay.

"Oh, nothing at all, first a little report of what passed yesterday evening between M. de Chanlay and his Excellency the Duc d'Olivares."

"You listened, then?" said the regent.

"Pardieu, monseigneur, what did you expect that I should do?"

"And you heard?"

"All. What do you think of his Catholic Majesty's pretensions?"

"I think that perhaps they use his name without his consent."

"And Cardinal Alberoni? Tndieu! monseigneur, how nicely they manage Europe: the Pretender in England; Prussia, Sweden, and Russia tearing Holland to pieces; the Empire recovering Sicily and Naples; the Grand Duchy of Tuscany for Philip the Fifth's son; Sardinia for the King of Savoy; Commachio for the Pope; France for Spain; really, this plan is somewhat grand, to emanate from the brain of a bell-ringer."

"All smoke these prospects!" said the duke; "mere dreams."

"And the Breton league, is that all smoke?"

"I am forced to own that that really exists."

"And the dagger of our conspirator, is that a dream?"

"No; it even appeared to me likely to be vigorously handled."

"Peste! monseigneur, you complained in the other plot that you found none but rose-water conspirators. Well, this time I hope you are better pleased. These fellows strike hard."

"Do you know," said the regent, thoughtfully, "that the Chevalier de Chanlay is of an energetic and vigorous nature."

"Ah, the next thing will be, you will conceive a great admiration for this fellow. I know, monseigneur, that you are capable of it."

"How is it that a prince always finds such natures amongst his enemies, and not amongst friends?"

"Because, monseigneur, hatred is a passion, and devotion often only a weakness; but if you will descend from the height of philosophy and deign to a simple act, namely, to give me two signatures —"

"What signatures?" asked the regent.

"First, there is a captain to be made a major."

"Captain La Jonquière?"

"Oh, no; as to him, we'll hang him when we have done with him; but meanwhile we must treat him with care."

"Who, then, is this captain?"

"A brave officer, whom monseigneur eight days, or rather eight nights ago, met in a house in the Rue St. Honoré."

"What do you mean?"

"Ah, I see I must aid your memory a little, monseigneur, since you have such a bad one."

"Speak, one can never get at the truth with you."

"In two words, eight nights ago you went out disguised as a musketeer through the little door in the Rue Richelieu, accompanied by Nocé and Simiane."

"It is true; what passed in the Rue St. Honoré?"

"Do you wish to know, monseigneur?"

"I do."

"I can refuse you nothing."

"Speak, then."

"You supped at the house, — that house, monseigneur."

"Still with Nocé and Simiane?"

"No, monseigneur, *tête-à-tête*. Nocé and Simiane supped too, but separately. You supped, then, and were at table, when a brave officer, who probably mistook the door, knocked so obstinately at yours, that you became impatient, and handled the unfortunate who disturbed you somewhat roughly; but he, who, it seems, was not of an enduring nature, took out his sword, whereupon you, monseigneur, who never look twice before committing a folly, drew your rapier and tried your skill with the officer."

"And the result?" asked the regent.

"Was that you got a scratch on the shoulder, in return for which you bestowed on your adversary a sword-thrust in the breast."

"But it was not dangerous?" asked the regent anxiously.

"No; fortunately the blade glided along the ribs."

"So much the better."

"But that is not all."

"How?"

"It appears that you owed the officer a special grudge."

"I had never seen him."

"Princes strike from a distance."

"What do you mean?"

"This officer had been a captain for eight years, when, on your highness's coming into power, he was dismissed."

"Then I suppose he deserved it."

"Ah, monseigneur, you would make us out as infallible as the Pope!"

"He must have committed some cowardly act."

"He is one of the bravest officers in the service."

"Some infamous act then?"

"He is the most honest fellow breathing."

"Then this is an injustice to be repaired."

"Exactly; and that is why I prepared this major's brevet."

"Give it to me, Dubois, you have some good in you sometimes."

A diabolical smile passed over Dubois's face as he drew from his portfolio a second paper.

The regent watched him uneasily.

"What is that paper?" asked he.

"Monseigneur, you have repaired an act of injustice, now do an act of justice."

"The order to arrest the Chevalier Gaston de Chanlay, and place him in the Bastille," cried the regent. "Ah! I see now why you bribed me with a good action; but stay, this requires reflection."

"Do you think I propose to you an abuse of power, monseigneur?" asked Dubois, laughing.

"No, but yet —"

"Monseigneur," continued Dubois, "when we have in our hands the government of a kingdom, the thing most necessary is to govern."

"But it seems to me that I am the master."

"To reward, yes; but on condition of punishing. The balance of justice is destroyed, monseigneur, if an eternal and blind mercy weighs down one of the scales. To act as you always wish, and often do, is not good, but weak. What is the reward of virtue, if you do not punish vice?"

"Then," said the regent, the more impatiently that he felt he was defending a bad though generous cause, "if you wished me to be severe, you should not have brought about an interview between me and this young man; you should not have given me the opportunity of appreciating his worth, but have allowed me to suppose him a common conspirator."

"Yes; and now, because he presented himself to your highness under a romantic guise, your artistic imagination



runs away with you. Diable! monseigneur, there is a time for everything; so chemistry with Hubert, engraving with Audran, music with Lafare, make love with the whole world; but politics with me."

"Mon Dieu!" said the regent, "is it worth while to defend a life, watched, tortured, calumniated as mine is?"

"But it is not your life you are defending, monseigneur; consider, among all these calumnies which pursue you, and against which Heaven knows you should be steeled by this time, your most bitter enemies have never accused you of cowardice; as to your life, at Steinkirk, at Neerwinden, and at Lerida you proved at what rate you valued it. Pardieu! if you were merly a private gentleman, a minister, or a prince of the blood, and you were assassinated, a man's heart would cease to beat, and that would be all; but wrongly or rightly, you coveted a place among the powerful ones of the world; for that end you broke the will of Louis the Fourteenth, you drove the bastards from the throne whereon they had already placed their feet, you made yourself Regent of France, — that is to say, the keystone of the arch of the world. If you die, it is not a man who falls, it is the pillar which supports the European edifice which gives way; thus our four last years of watchfulness and struggles would be lost, and everything around would be shaken. Look at England, — the Chevalier de Saint George will renew the mad enterprises of the Pretender; look at Holland, — Russia, Sweden, and Prussia would hunt her to death; look at Austria, — her two-headed eagle seizes Venice and Milan, as an indemnification for the loss of Spain; cast your eyes on France, — no longer France, but Philip the Fifth's vassal. Look finally at Louis the Fifteenth, the last descendant of the greatest monarch that ever gave light to the world, and the child whom by watchfulness and care we have saved from the fate of his father, his mother, and his uncles, to place him safe and sound on the throne of his ancestors; this child falls back again into the hands of those whom an adulterous law boldly calls to

succeed him; thus, on all sides, murder, desolation, ruin, civil and foreign wars. And why? Because it pleases Monsieur Philippe d'Orléans to think himself still major of the king's troops, or commandant of the army in Spain, and to forget that he ceased to be so from the moment he became Regent of France."

"You *will* have it, then," said the duke.

"Stay, monseigneur," said Dubois, "it shall not be said that in an affair of this importance you gave way to my importunity. I have said what I had to say, now I leave you, — do as you please. I leave you the paper; I am going to give some orders, and in a quarter of an hour I will return to fetch it."

And Dubois saluted the regent and went out.

Left alone, the regent became thoughtful. This whole affair, so sombre and so tenacious of life, this remains of the former conspiracy, filled the Duke's mind with gloomy thoughts; he had braved death in battle, had laughed at abductions meditated by the Spaniards and by Louis the Fourteenth's bastards. But this time a secret horror oppressed him; he felt an involuntary admiration for the young man whose poniard was raised against him; sometimes he hated him, at others he excused, he almost loved him. Dubois, cowering down over this conspiracy like an infernal ape over some dying prey, and piercing with his ravenous claws to its very heart, seemed to him to possess a sublime intelligence and power; he felt that he, ordinarily so courageous, should have defended his life feebly in this instance, and his eyes involuntarily sought the paper.

"Yes," murmured he, "Dubois is right, my life is no longer my own; yesterday my mother also told me the same thing. Who knows what might happen if I were to fall? The same as happened at the death of my ancestor Henry the Fourth, perchance. After having reconquered his kingdom step by step, he was about — thanks to ten years of peace, economy, and prosperity — to add Alsace, Lorraine, and perhaps Flanders to France, while the Duke

of Savoy, his son-in-law, descending the Alps, should cut out for himself a kingdom in the Milanais, and with the leavings of that kingdom enrich the kingdom of Venice and strengthen the Dukes of Modena, Florence, and Mantua; everything was ready for the immense result, prepared during the whole life of a king who was at once a legislator and a soldier; then the 13th of May arrived; a carriage with the royal livery passed the Rue de la Féronnière, and the clock of Les Innocents struck three. In a moment all was destroyed; past prosperity, hopes of the future; it needed a whole century, a minister called Richelieu and a king called Louis the Fourteenth, to cicatrise the wound made in France by Ravaillac's knife. Yes, Dubois was right," cried the duke, "and I must abandon this young man to human justice; besides, it is not I who condemn him; the judges are there to decide; and," added he, with animation, "have I not still the power to pardon."

And quieted by the thought of this royal prerogative, which he exercised in the name of Louis XV., he signed the paper, and left the room to finish dressing.

Ten minutes after the door opened softly, Dubois carefully looked in, saw that the room was empty, approached the table near which the prince had been seated, looked rapidly at the order, smiled on seeing the signature, and folding it in four, placed it in his pocket, and left the room with an air of great satisfaction.

CHAPTER XX.

BLOOD REVEALS ITSELF.

WHEN Gaston returned from the Barrière de la Conférence, and left his room, he found La Jonquière installed by the fireplace, and discussing a bottle of wine which he had just uncorked.

"Well, chevalier," said he, as Gaston entered, "how do you like my room? it is convenient, is it not? Sit down and taste this wine; it rivals the best Rosseau. Do you drink Rosseau? No, they do not drink wine in Bretagne; they drink cider or beer, I believe. I never could get anything worth drinking there, except brandy."

Gaston did not reply, for he was so occupied that he had not even heard what La Jonquière said. He threw himself in an easy chair, with his hand in his pocket, holding Hélène's first letter.

"Where is she?" he asked himself; "this immense, unbounded Paris may keep her from me for ever. Oh! the difficulty is too great for a man without power or experience!"

"Apropos," said La Jonquière, who had followed the young man's ideas easily, "there is a letter for you."

"From Bretagne?" asked the chevalier, trembling.

"No; from Paris. A beautiful writing, — evidently a woman's."

"Where is it?" cried Gaston.

"Ask our host. When I came in he held it in his hands."

"Give it to me," cried Gaston, rushing into the common room.

"What does monsieur want?" asked Tapin, with his usual politeness.

"My letter."

"What letter?"

"The letter you received for me."

"Pardon, monsieur; I forgot it."

And he gave Gaston the letter.

"Poor imbecile!" said the false La Jonquière, "and these idiots think of conspiring. It is like D'Harmental; they think they can attend to love and politics at the same time. Triple fools; if they were to go at once to La Fillon's for the former, the latter would not be so likely to bring them to the Place de Grève."

Gaston returned joyously, reading and rereading Hélène's letter. "Rue du Faubourg St. Antoine; a white house behind trees, — poplars, I think. I could not see the number, but it is the thirty-first or thirty-second house on the left side, after passing a château with towers, resembling a prison."

"Oh," cried Gaston, "I can find that; it is the Bastille." Dubois overheard these words.

"Parbleu; I will take care you shall find it, if I lead you there myself."

Gaston looked at his watch, and finding that it wanted two hours of the time appointed for his rendezvous in the Rue du Bac, took up his hat and was going out.

"What! are you going away?" asked Dubois.

"I am obliged to do so."

"And our appointment for eleven o'clock?"

"It is not yet nine."

"You do not want me?"

"No, thank you."

"If you are preparing an abduction, for instance, I am an adept, and might assist you."

"Thank you," said Gaston, reddening involuntarily, "but I am not."

Dubois whistled an air, to show that he took the answer for what it was worth.

"Shall I find you here on my return," asked Gaston.

"I do not know; perhaps I also have to reassure some pretty creature who is interested in me; but, at any rate, at the appointed hour you will find your yesterday's guide with the same carriage and the same coachman."

Gaston took a hasty leave. At the corner of the cemetery of the Innocents he took a carriage, and was driven to the Rue St. Antoine. At the twentieth house he alighted, ordering the driver to follow him; then he proceeded to examine the left side of the street. He soon found himself facing a high wall, over which he saw the tops of some tall poplars; this house, he felt sure, was the one where Hélène was.

But here his difficulties were but commencing. There was no opening in the wall, neither bell nor knocker at the door, those who came with couriers galloping before them to strike with their silver-headed canes could dispense with a knocker. Gaston was afraid to strike with a stone, for fear of being denied admittance, he therefore ordered the coachman to stop, and going up a narrow lane by one side of the house, he imitated the cry of the screech-owl, — a signal preconcerted.

Hélène started. She recognised the cry, and it seemed to her as though she were again in the Augustine convent at Clisson, with the chevalier's boat under her windows. She ran to the window; Gaston was there.

Hélène and he exchanged a glance; then, re-entering the room, she rang a bell which Madame Desroches had given her so violently that two servants and Madame Desroches herself all entered at once.

"Go and open the door," said Hélène, imperiously. "There is some one at the door whom I expect."

"Stop," said Madame Desroches to the valet, who was going to obey; "I will go myself."

"Useless, madame. I know who it is, and I have already told you that it is a person whom I expect."

"But mademoiselle ought not to receive this person," replied the duenna, trying to stand her ground.

"I am no longer at the convent, madame, and I am not yet in prison," replied H  l  ne; "and I shall receive whom I please."

"But, at least, I may know who this is?"

"I see no objection. It is the same person whom I received at Rambouillet."

"M. de Livry?"

"Yes."

"I have positive orders not to allow this young man to see you."

"And I order you to admit him instantly."

"Mademoiselle, you disobey your father," said Madame Desroches, half angrily, half respectfully.

"My father does not see through your eyes, madame."

"Yet, who is master of your fate?"

"I alone," cried H  l  ne, unwilling to allow any domination.

"Mademoiselle, I swear to you that your father —"

"Will approve, if he be my father."

These words, given with all the pride of an empress, cowed Madame Desroches, and she had recourse to silence.

"Well," said H  l  ne, "I ordered that the door should be opened; does no one obey when I command?"

No one stirred; they waited for the orders of Madame Desroches.

H  l  ne smiled scornfully, and made such an imperious gesture that Madame Desroches moved from the door, and made way for her; H  l  ne then, slowly and with dignity, descended the staircase herself, followed by Madame Desroches, who was petrified to find such a will in a young girl just out of a convent.

"She is a queen," said the waiting-maid to Madame Desroches; "I know I should have gone to open the door if she had not done so herself."

"Alas!" said the duenna, "they are all alike in that family."

"Do you know the family, then?" asked the servant, astonished.

Madame Desroches saw that she had said too much.

"Yes," said she; "I formerly knew the marquis, her father."

Meanwhile Hélène had descended the staircase, crossed the court, and opened the door; on the step stood Gaston.

"Come, my friend," said Hélène.

Gaston followed her, the door closed behind them, and they entered a room on the ground floor.

"You called me, and I am here, Hélène," said the young man; "what do you fear, what dangers threaten you?"

"Look around you," said Hélène, "and judge."

The room in which they were was a charming boudoir, adjoining the dining-room, with which it communicated not only by folding-doors, but also by an opening almost concealed by rare and peculiar flowers. The boudoir was hung with blue satin; over the doors were pictures by Claude Audran, representing the history of Venus in four tableaux, while the panels formed other episodes of the same history, all most graceful in outline and voluptuous in expression. This was the house which Nocé, in the innocence of his heart, had designated as fit for a prude.

"Gaston," said Hélène, "I wonder whether I should really mistrust this man, who calls himself my father. My fears are more aroused here than at Rambouillet."

After examining the boudoir, Gaston and Hélène passed into the dining-room, and then into the garden, which was ornamented with marble statues of the same subjects as the pictures. As they returned, they passed Madame Desroches, who had not lost sight of them, and who, raising her hands in a despairing manner, exclaimed, —

"Oh, mon Dieu! what would monseigneur think of this?"

These words kindled the smouldering fire in Gaston's breast.

"Monseigneur!" cried he; "you heard, Hélène, — monseigneur! We are then, as I feared, in the house of one of those great men who purchase pleasure at the expense

of honour. Hélène, do not allow yourself to be deceived. At Rambouillet I foresaw danger; here I see it."

"Mon Dieu," said Hélène, "but if, by aid of his valets, this man should retain me here by force."

"Do not fear, Hélène; am not I here?"

"Oh!" said Hélène, "and must I renounce the sweet idea of finding a father, a preceptor, a friend."

"And at what a moment, when you are about to be left alone in the world," said Gaston, unconsciously betraying a part of his secret.

"What were you saying, Gaston? What is the meaning of these words?"

"Nothing, — nothing," replied the young man; "some meaningless words which escaped me, and to which you must not attach any consequence."

"Gaston, you are hiding some dreadful secret from me, since you speak of abandoning me at the moment I lose a father."

"Hélène, I will never abandon you except with life."

"Ah," cried the young girl, "your life is in danger, and it is thus that you fear to abandon me. Gaston, you betray yourself; you are no longer the Gaston of former days. You met me to-day with a constrained joy; losing me yesterday did not cause you intense sorrow, there are more important prospects in your mind than in your heart. There is something in you — pride, or ambition — more powerful than your love. You turn pale, Gaston; your silence breaks my heart."

"Nothing, — nothing, Hélène, I assure you. Is it surprising that I am troubled to find you here, alone and defenceless, and not know how to protect you; for doubtless this is a man of power. In Bretagne I should have had friends and two hundred peasants to defend me; here I have no one."

"Is that all, Gaston?"

"That is, it seems to me, more than enough."

"No, Gaston, for we will leave this house instantly."

Gaston turned pale; Hélène lowered her eyes, and placing her hand in that of her lover, —

"Before these people who watch us," said she, "before the eyes of this woman, we will go away together."

Gaston's eyes lighted up with joy; but sombre thoughts quickly clouded them again. Hélène watched this changing expression.

"Am I not your wife, Gaston?" said she; "is not my honour yours? Let us go."

"But where to place you?" said Gaston.

"Gaston," replied Hélène, "I know nothing, I can do nothing; I am ignorant of Paris, — of the world; I only know myself and you; well, you have opened my eyes; I distrust all except your fidelity and love."

Gaston was in despair. Six months previous, and he would have paid with his life the generous devotion of the courageous girl.

"Hélène, reflect," said Gaston. "If we were mistaken, and this man be really your father!"

"Gaston, do you forget that you first taught me to distrust him?"

"Oh, yes, Hélène, let us go," cried Gaston.

"Where are we to go?" asked Hélène; "but you need not reply, — if you know, it is sufficient."

"Hélène," said Gaston, "I will not insult you by swearing to respect your honour; the offer which you have made to-day I have long hesitated to make, — rich, happy, sure for the present of fortune and happiness, I would have placed all at your feet, trusting to God for the future; but at this moment I must tell you, that you were not mistaken; from day to day, from this day to the next, there is a chance of a terrible event. I must tell you now, Hélène, what I can offer you. If I succeed, a high and powerful position; but if I fail, flight, exile, it may be poverty. Do you love me enough, Hélène, or rather do you love your honour enough to brave all this and follow me?"

"I am ready, Gaston; tell me to follow you, and I do so."

"Well, Hélène, your confidence shall not be displaced, believe me. I will take you to a person who will protect you, if necessary, and who in my absence will replace the father you thought to find, but whom you have, on the contrary, lost a second time."

"Who is this person, Gaston? This is not distrust," added Hélène, with a charming smile, "but curiosity."

"Some one who can refuse me nothing, Hélène, whose days are dependent on mine, and who will think I demand small payment when I exact your peace and security."

"Still mysterious, Gaston: really, you frighten me."

"This secret is the last, Hélène; from this moment my whole life will be open to you."

"I thank you, Gaston."

"And now I am at your orders, Hélène."

"Let us go then."

Hélène took the chevalier's arm, and crossed the drawing-room, where sat Madame Desroches, pale with anger, and scrawling a letter, whose destination we can guess.

"Mon Dieu! mademoiselle, where are you going? what are you doing?"

"I am going away from a house where my honour is threatened."

"What!" cried the old lady, springing to her feet, "you are going away with your lover."

"You are mistaken, madame," replied Hélène, in an accent of dignity, "it is with my husband."

Madame Desroches, terrified, let her hands fall by her side, powerless.

"You shall not go, mademoiselle, even if I am forced to use violence."

"Try, madame," said Hélène, in the queenly tone which seemed natural to her.

"Hola, Picard, Coutourier, Blanchet."

The servants appeared.

"The first who stops me I kill," said Gaston quietly, as he drew his sword.

"What a will," cried Madame Desroches; "ah, Mesdemoiselles de Chartres and de Valois, I recognise you there."

The two young people heard this exclamation, but did not understand it.

"We are going, madame," said Hélène; "do not forget to repeat, word by word, what I told you."

And, hanging on Gaston's arm, flushed with pleasure and pride, brave as an ancient Amazon, the young girl ordered that the door should be opened for her; the Swiss did not dare to resist. Gaston took Hélène by the hand, summoned the carriage in which he had come, and seeing that he was to be followed, he stepped towards the assailants, and said in a loud voice, —

"Two steps further, and I tell this history aloud, and place myself and mademoiselle under the safeguard of the public honour."

Madame Desroches believed that Gaston knew the mystery, and would declare it: she therefore thought best to retire quickly, followed by the servants.

The intelligent driver started at a gallop.

CHAPTER XXI.

WHAT PASSED IN THE RUE DU BAC WHILE WAITING FOR
GASTON.

"WHAT, monseigneur, you hero!" cried Dubois, entering the room of the house in the Rue du Bac, and finding the regent seated in the same place as on the previous day.

"Yes; is there anything wonderful in that? Have I not an appointment at noon with the chevalier?"

"But I thought the order you signed would have put an end to these conferences."

"You were mistaken, Dubois; I wish to have another interview with this young man. I shall make one more effort to induce him to renounce his plans."

"And if he should do so?"

"Then all will be at an end, there will be no conspiracy; there will have been no conspirators. I cannot punish intentions."

"With any other I should not allow this; but with him I say, as you please."

"You think he will remain firm?"

"Oh! I am quite easy. But when he has decidedly refused, when you are quite convinced that he persists in his intention of assassinating you, then you will give him over to me, will you not?"

"Yes, but not here."

"Why not here?"

"Better to arrest him at his hotel."

"There, at the Muids d'Amour, with Tapin and D'Argenson's people — impossible, monsieur. Bourguignon's affair is still in everybody's mouth in that quarter. I am not sure that they even quite believe in the attack of apoplexy, since Tapin now gives strict measure. It will be much better to

arrest him as he leaves here, monseigneur; the house is quiet; four men could easily do it, and they are already here. I will move them, as you insist on seeing him; and, instead of arresting him as he enters, it must be done as he leaves. At the door a carriage shall be ready to take him to the Bastille, so that even the coachman who brings him here shall not know what has become of him. No one but Monsieur Delaunay shall know; and I will answer for his discretion."

"Do as you please."

"That is my usual custom."

"Rascal that you are!"

"But I think monseigneur reaps the benefit of the rascality."

"Oh, I know you are always right."

"But the others?"

"What others?"

"The Bretons, Pontcalec, Du Couëdic, Talhouet, and Montlouis?"

"Oh, the unfortunates; you know their names."

"And how do you think I have passed my time at the hotel Muids d'Amour?"

"They will know of their accomplice's arrest."

"How?"

"Having no letter from Paris, they will fear that something is wrong."

"Bah! Is not Captain La Jonquière there to reassure them?"

"True; but they must know the writing?"

"Not bad, monseigneur, you are improving; but you take useless precautions, as Racine says. At this moment, probably, they are arrested."

"And who despatched the order?"

"I. Pardieu! I am not your minister for nothing. Besides, you signed it."

"I! Are you mad?"

"Assuredly, these men are not less guilty than the cheva-

lier; and in authorising me to arrest one, you authorised me to arrest all."

"And when did the bearer of this order leave?"

Dubois took out his watch.

"Just three hours ago. Thus, it was a poetical license when I said they were all arrested; they will not be till to-morrow morning."

"Bretagne will be aroused, Dubois."

"Bah! I have taken measures."

"The Breton tribunals will not condemn their compatriots."

"That case is foreseen."

"And, if they should be condemned, none will be found to execute them. It will be a second edition of the affair at Chalais. Remember it was at Nantes that *that* took place, Dubois. I tell you, Bretons are unaccommodating."

"This is a point to settle with the commissioners, of whom this is a list. I will send three or four executioners from Paris, — men accustomed to noble deeds, — who have preserved the traditions of the Cardinal de Richelieu."

"Good God!" cried the regent; "bloodshed under my reign, — I do not like it. As to Count Horn, he was a thief, and Duchaffour a wretch; but I am tender, Dubois."

"No, monseigneur, you are not tender; you are uncertain and weak; I told you so when you were my scholar, — I tell you so again, now that you are my master. When you were christened, your godmothers, the fairies, gave you every gift of nature, — strength, beauty, courage, and mind: only one — whom they did not invite because she was old, and they probably foresaw your aversion to old women — arrived the last, and gave you weakness, — that spoiled all."

"And who told you this pretty tale? Perrault or St. Simon?"

"The princess palatine, your mother."

The regent laughed.

"And whom shall we choose for the commission?" asked he.

"Oh, monseigneur, people of mind and resolution, be sure; not provincials; not very sensitive to family scenes; men old in the dust of tribunals, whom the Breton men will not frighten with their fierce eyes, nor the Breton women seduce with their beautiful languid ones."

The regent made no reply.

"After all," continued Dubois, "these people may not be as guilty as we suppose. What they have plotted let us recapitulate. Bah! mere trifles. To bring back the Spaniards into France, what is that? To call Philip the Fifth king, the renouncer of his country; to break all the laws of the state, — these good Bretons."

"Dubois, I know the national law as well as you."

"Then, monseigneur, if you speak truly, you have only to approve the nomination of the commissioners I have chosen."

"How many are there?"

"Twelve."

"Their names?"

Dubois gave in the list.

"Ah, you were right, — a happy choice; but who is to preside over this amiable assembly?"

"Guess, monseigneur."

"Take care; you must have an honest man at the head of these ravagers."

"I have one."

"Who is it?"

"An ambassador."

"Cellamare, perhaps."

"Ma foi! I think if you would let him come out of Blois he would not refuse you even the heads of his accomplices."

"Let him stop at Blois. Who is to preside?"

"Château-Neuf."

"The ambassador from Holland, from the great king. Dubois, I do not generally compliment you, but this time you have done wonders."

"You understand, monseigneur; he knows that these people wish to make a republic; and he, who is brought up to know none but Sultans, and who has a horror of Holland through the horror of Louis XIV. for republics, has accepted with a good grace. We shall have Argram for prosecutor; Cayet shall be our secretary. We go to work quickly and well, monseigneur, for time presses."

"But shall we at least have quiet afterwards?"

"I believe so. We may sleep all day and all night; that is to say, when we have finished the war in Spain."

"Oh!" cried the regent, "why did I strive for the regency? I should laugh to see M. du Maine freeing himself with his Jesuits and his Spaniards! Madame de Maintenon and her politics, with Villeroy and Villars, would drive away the spleen; and Hubert says it is good to laugh once a day."

"Apropos of Madame de Maintenon," replied Dubois; "you know, monseigneur, that she is very ill, and that she cannot live a fortnight."

"Bah!"

"Since the imprisonment of Madame du Maine and the exile of her husband, she says that decidedly Louis XIV. is dead, and that she goes weeping to rejoin him."

"Which does not trouble you, eh?"

"Oh! I confess that I hate her cordially; it was she who made the king open his eyes so wide when I asked for the red hat at your marriage; and, corbleu! it was not an easy thing to arrange, monseigneur, as you know. If you had not been there to redress my wrongs, she would have spoiled my career. If I could but have crammed her M. du Maine into this Bretagne affair; but it was impossible,—the poor man is half dead with fear, so that he says to every one he meets, 'Do you know there has been a conspiracy against the government of the king and against the person of the regent? it is a disgrace to France. Ah! if all men were only like me!'"

"No one would conspire; that is certain," said the regent.

"He has disowned his wife," added Dubois, laughing.

"And she has disowned her husband," said the regent, laughing also.

"I should not advise you to imprison them together, — they would fight."

"Therefore I have placed one at Douzens, and the other at Dijon."

"From whence they bite by post."

"Let us put all that aside, Dubois."

"Ah, monseigneur! you have, I see, sworn the loss of the blood of Louis XIV.; you are a true executioner."

This audacious joke proved how sure Dubois felt of his ascendancy over the prince.

The regent signed the order naming the tribunal, and Dubois went out to prepare for Gaston's arrest.

Gaston, on his return to the Muids d'Amour, found the same carriage and the same guide awaiting him that had before conducted him to the Rue du Bac. Gaston, who did not wish Hélène to alight, asked if he could continue his route in the hired carriage in which he had just arrived; the man replied that he saw no objection, and mounted on the box by the driver, to whom he told the address.

During the drive, Gaston, instead of displaying the courage which Hélène had expected, was sad, and yet gave no explanation of his sadness. As they entered the Rue du Bac, Hélène, in despair at finding so little force of character in him on whom she leaned for protection, said, "Gaston, you frighten me."

"Hélène, you shall see before long if I am acting for your good or not."

The carriage stopped.

"Hélène, there is one in this house who will stand in the place of a father to you. Let me go first, and I will announce you."

"Ah!" cried Hélène, trembling, she knew not why; "and you are going to leave me here alone?"

"You have nothing to fear, *Hélène*; besides, in a few minutes I will return and fetch you."

The young girl held out her hand, which Gaston pressed, to his lips; the door opened; the carriage drove into the courtyard, where Gaston felt that *Hélène* ran no danger; the man who had come to the hotel to fetch him opened the carriage door; Gaston again pressed *Hélène's* hand, alighted, ascended the steps, and entered the corridor, when his guide left him as before.

Gaston, knowing that *Hélène* waited his return, at once tapped at the door of the room.

"Enter," said the voice of the false Spaniard.

Gaston knew the voice, entered, and with a calm face approached the Duc d'Olivares.

"You are punctual, monsieur," said the latter; "we named noon, and it is now striking."

"I am pressed for time, monseigneur; my undertaking weighs on me; I fear to feel remorse. That astonishes and alarms you, does it not, monseigneur? But reassure yourself; the remorse of a man such as I am troubles no one but himself."

"In truth, monsieur," cried the regent, with a feeling of joy he could not quite conceal, "I think you are drawing back."

"Not so, monseigneur; since fate chose me to strike the prince, I have gone steadily forward, and shall do so till my mission is accomplished."

"Monsieur, I thought I detected some hesitation in your words; and words are of weight in certain mouths, and under certain circumstances."

"Monsieur, in Bretagne we speak as we feel, but we also do as we promise."

"Then you are resolved?"

"More than ever."

"Because, you see," replied the regent, "there is still time, — the evil is not yet done."

"The evil, you call it, monseigneur," said Gaston; "what shall I call it then?"

"It is thus that I meant it," replied the regent; "the evil is for you, since you feel remorse."

"It is not generous, monseigneur, to dwell on a confidence which I should not have made to any person of less merit than yourself."

"And it is because I appreciate your worth, monsieur, that I tell you there is yet time to draw back; that I ask if you have reflected — if you repent having mixed yourself with all these" — the duke hesitated — "these audacious enterprises. Fear nothing from me, — I will protect you, even if you desert us; I have seen you but once, but I think I judge of you as you deserve, — men of worth are so rare that the regrets will be for us."

"Such kindness overwhelms me, monseigneur," said Gaston, who, in spite of his courage, felt some indecision. "My prince, I do not hesitate; but my reflections are those of a duellist, who goes to the ground determined to kill his enemy, yet deploring the necessity which forces him to rob a man of life. But here the interest is so great, so superior to the weaknesses of our nature, that I will be true to my friendship if not my sympathies, and will conduct myself so that you shall esteem in me even the momentary weakness which for a second held back my arm."

"Well," said the regent, "how shall you proceed?"

"I shall wait till I meet him face to face, and then I shall not use an arquebuss, as Paltrot did, nor a pistol, as Vitry did. I shall say, 'Monseigneur, you are the curse of France, — I sacrifice you to her salvation;' and I shall stab him with my poniard."

"As Ravallac did," said the duke, with a serenity which made Gaston shudder; "it is well."

Gaston did not reply.

"This plan appears to me the most secure, and I approve of it; but I must ask you one other question: suppose you should be taken and interrogated?"

"Your excellency knows what men do in such cases, — they die, but do not answer; and since you have quoted

Ravailiac, I think, if my memory serves me, that was what he did,—and yet Ravailiac was not a gentleman.”

Gaston's pride did not displease the regent, who had a young heart and a chivalric mind; besides, accustomed to worn-out and time-serving courtiers, Gaston's vigorous and simple nature was a novelty to him; and we know how the regent loved a novelty.

“I may then reckon,” said he, “that you are immovable?”

Gaston looked surprised that the duke should repeat this question.

“Yes,” said the regent; “I see you are decided.”

“Absolutely, and wait your last instructions.”

“How? *my* instructions?”

“Certainly; I have placed myself body and soul at your disposal.”

The duke rose.

“Well,” said he, “you must go out by that door, and cross the garden which surrounds the house. In a carriage which awaits you at the bottom you will find my secretary, who will give you a pass for an audience with the regent; besides that, you will have the warranty of my word.”

“That is all I have to ask on that point, monseigneur.”

“Have you anything else to say?”

“Yes; before I take leave of you, whom I may never see again in this world, I have a boon to ask.”

“Speak, monsieur; I listen.”

“Monsieur,” said Gaston, “do not wonder if I hesitate a moment, for this is no personal favour and no ordinary service. Gaston de Chanlay needs but a dagger, and here it is; but in sacrificing his body he would not lose his soul; mine, monseigneur, belongs to God first and then to a young girl whom I love to idolatry,—sad love, is it not, which has bloomed so near a tomb? To abandon this pure and tender girl would be to tempt God in a most rash manner, for I see that sometimes he tries us cruelly, and lets even his angels suffer. I love, then, an adorable woman, whom my affec-

tion has supported and protected against infamous schemes; when I am dead or banished, what will become of her? *Our heads fall, monseigneur; they are those of simple gentlemen; but you are a powerful adversary, and supported by a powerful king; you can conquer evil fortune. I wish to place in your hands the treasure of my soul. You will bestow on her all the protection which, as an accomplice, as an associate, you owe to me.*"

"Monsieur, I promise you," replied the regent, deeply moved.

"That is not all, monseigneur; misfortune may overtake me, and find me not able to bestow my person upon her; I would yet leave her my name. If I die she has no fortune, for she is an orphan. On leaving Nantes I made a will wherein I left her everything I possessed. Monseigneur if I die, let her be a widow — is it possible?"

"Who opposes it?"

"No one; but I may be arrested to-morrow, this evening, on putting my foot outside this house."

The regent started at this strange presentiment.

"Suppose I am taken to the Bastille; could you obtain for me permission to marry her before my execution."

"I am sure of it."

"You will use every means to obtain this favour for me? Swear it to me, monseigneur, that I may bless your name, and that even under torture nothing may escape but a thanksgiving when I think of you."

"On my honour, monsieur, I promise you that this young girl shall be sacred to me; she shall inherit in my heart all the affection which I involuntarily feel for you."

"Monseigneur, one word more."

"Speak, monsieur; I listen with the deepest sympathy."

"This young girl knows nothing of my project; she does not know what brought me to Paris, nor the catastrophe which threatens us, for I have not had the courage to tell her. You will tell it to her, monseigneur, — prepare her for the event. I shall never see her again, but to become

her husband. If I were to see her again at the moment of striking the blow which separates me from her, my hand might tremble, and this must not be."

"On my word of honour, monsieur," said the regent, softened beyond all expression, "I repeat, not only shall this young girl be sacred to me, but I will do all you wish for her,—she shall reap the fruits of the respect and affection with which you have inspired me."

"Now," said Gaston, "I am strong."

"And where is this young girl?"

"Below, in the carriage which brought me. Let me retire, monseigneur, and only tell me where she will be placed."

"Here, monsieur; this house, which is not inhabited, and which is very suitable for a young girl, shall be hers."

"Monseigneur, your hand."

The regent held out his hand, but hearing a little dry cough, he understood that Dubois was becoming impatient, and he indicated to Gaston that the audience was over.

"Once more, monseigneur, watch over this young girl; she is beautiful, amiable, and proud,—one of those noble natures which we meet but seldom. Adieu, monseigneur, I go to find your secretary."

"And must I tell her that you are about to take a man's life?" asked the regent, making one more effort to restrain Gaston.

"Yes, Monseigneur," said the chevalier; "but you will add that I do it to save France."

"Go, then, monsieur," said the duke, opening a door which led into the garden, "and follow the directions I have given you."

"Wish me good fortune, monseigneur."

"The madman," thought the regent; "does he wish me to pray for success to his dagger's thrust? *Ma foi*, no!"

Gaston went out, the gravel, half covered with snow, creaked under his feet—the regent watched him for some time from the window of the corridor—then, when he had lost sight of him,—

"Well," said he, "each one must go his own way. Poor fellow!"

And he returned to the room, where he found Dubois, who had entered by another door, and was waiting for him.

Dubois's face wore an expression of malicious satisfaction which did not escape the regent, who watched him some time in silence, as if trying to discover what was passing through the brain of this second Mephistopheles.

Dubois was the first to speak.

"Well, monseigneur, you are rid of him at last, I hope."

"Yes," replied the duke; "but in a manner which greatly displeases me. I do not like playing a part in your comedies, as you know."

"Possibly; but you might, perhaps, do wisely in giving me a part in yours."

"How so?"

"They would be more successful, and the denouements would be better."

"I do not understand. Explain yourself, and quickly, for I have some one waiting whom I must receive."

"Oh! certainly, monseigneur, receive them, and we will continue our conversation later,—the denouement of this comedy has already taken place, and cannot be changed."

And with these words, Dubois bowed with the mock respect which he generally assumed whenever, in the eternal game they played against each other, he held the best cards.

Nothing made the regent so uneasy as this simulated respect; he held him back,—

"What is there now?" asked he; "what have you discovered?"

"That you are a skilful dissimulator, peste!"

"That astonishes you?"

"No, it troubles me; a few steps further, and you will do wonders in this art; you will have no further need of me; you will have to send me away to educate your son, whom, it must be confessed, requires a master like myself."

"Speak quickly."

"Certainly, monseigneur; it is not now, however, a question of your son, but of your daughter."

"Of which daughter?"

"Ah! true; there are so many. First, the Abbess of Chelles, then Madame de Berry, then Mademoiselle de Valois; then the others, too young for the world, and therefore for me to speak of; then, lastly, the charming Bretagne flower, the wild blossom which was to be kept away from Dubois's poisoning breath, for fear it should wither under it."

"Do you dare to say I was wrong?"

"Not so, monseigneur: you have done wonders; not wishing to have anything to do with the infamous Dubois, for which I commend you, you—the Archbishop of Cambrai being dead—have taken in his place the good, the worthy, the pure Nocé, and have borrowed his house."

"Ah!" said the regent, "you know that?"

"And what a house! Pure as its master,—yes, monseigneur, you are full of prudence and wisdom. Let us conceal the corruptions of the world from this innocent child, let us remove from her everything that can destroy her primitive *naïveté*; this is why we choose this dwelling for her,—a moral sanctuary, where the priestesses of virtue, and doubtless always under pretext of their ingenuousness, take the most ingenuous but least permitted of positions."

"Nocé told me that all was proper."

"Do you know the house, monseigneur?"

"Do I look at such things?"

"Ah! no; your sight is not good, I remember."

"Dubois!"

"For furniture your daughter will have strange couches, magic sofas; and as to books, ah! that is the climax. Nocé's books are good for the instruction and formation of youth; they would do well to go with the breviary of Bussy-Rabutin, of which I presented you a copy on your twelfth birthday."

"Yes; serpent that you are."

"In short, the most austere prudery prevails over the dwelling. I had chosen it for the education of the son; but monseigneur, who looks at things differently, chose it for the daughter."

"Ah, ça! Dubois," said the regent, "you weary me."

"I am just at the end, monseigneur. No doubt, your daughter was well pleased with the residence; for, like all of your blood, she is very intelligent."

The regent shuddered, and guessed that some disagreeable news was hidden under the long preamble and mocking smile of Dubois.

"However, monseigneur, see what the spirit of contradiction will do; she was not content with the dwelling you chose for her, and she is moving."

"What do you mean?"

"I am wrong,—she *has* moved."

"My daughter gone!" cried the regent.

"Exactly," said Dubois.

"How?"

"Through the door. Oh, she is not one of those young ladies who go through the windows, or by night,—oh, she is of your blood, monseigneur; if I had ever doubted it, I should be convinced now."

"And Madame Desroches?"

"She is at the Palais Royal, I have just left her; she came to announce it to your highness."

"Could she not prevent it?"

"Mademoiselle commanded."

"She should have made the servants close the doors: they did not know that she was my daughter, and had no reason to obey her."

"Madame Desroches was afraid of mademoiselle's anger, but the servants were afraid of the sword."

"Of the sword! are you drunk, Dubois?"

"Oh, I am very likely to get drunk on chicory water! No, monseigneur; if I am drunk, it is with admiration of

your highness's perspicacity when you try to conduct an affair all alone."

"But what sword do you mean?"

"The sword which Mademoiselle Hélène disposes of, and which belongs to a charming young man —"

"Dubois!"

"Who loves her!"

"Dubois! you will drive me mad."

"And who followed her from Nantes to Rambouillet with infinite gallantry?"

"Monsieur de Livry?"

"Ah! you know his name; then I am telling you nothing new, monseigneur."

"Dubois, I am overwhelmed."

"Not without sufficient cause, monseigneur; but see what is the result of your managing your own affairs, while you have at the same time to look after those of France."

"But where is she?"

"Ah! where indeed? how should I know?"

"Dubois, *you* have told me of her flight,—I look to you to discover her retreat. Dubois, my dear Dubois, for God's sake find my daughter!"

"Ah! monseigneur, you are exactly like the father in Molière, and I am like Scapin,—‘My good Scapin, my dear Scapin, find me my daughter.’ Monseigneur, I am sorry for it, but Géroute could say no more; however, we will look for your daughter, and rescue her from the ravisher."

"Well, find her, Dubois, and ask for what you please when you have done so."

"Ah, that is something like speaking."

The regent had thrown himself back in an arm chair, and leant his head upon his hands. Dubois left him to his grief, congratulating himself that this affection would double his empire over the duke. All at once, while Dubois was watching him with a malicious smile, some one tapped at the door.

"Who is there?" asked Dubois.

"Monseigneur," said an usher's voice at the door, "there is in the carriage which brought the chevalier a young woman who wishes to know if he is coming down soon."

Dubois made a bound towards the door, but he was too late; the regent, to whom the usher's words had recalled the solemn promise he had made to Gaston, rose at once.

"Where are you going, monseigneur?" asked Dubois.

"To receive this young girl."

"That is my affair, not yours,—you forget that you abandoned this conspiracy to me."

"I gave up the chevalier to you, but I promised him to be a father to this girl whom he loves. I have pledged my word, and I will keep it; since through me she loses her lover, I must at least console her."

"I undertake it," said Dubois, trying to hide his paleness and agitation under one of his own peculiar smiles.

"Hold your tongue, and remain here," said the regent.

"Let me at least speak to her, monseigneur."

"I will speak to her myself,—this is no affair of yours; I have taken it upon myself, have given my word as a gentleman. Silence, and remain here."

Dubois ground his teeth; but when the regent spoke in this tone, he knew he must obey: he leant against the chimney-piece and waited.

Soon the rustling of a silk dress was heard.

"Yes, madame," said the usher, "this way."

"Here she is," said the duke. "Remember one thing, Dubois: this young girl is in no way responsible for her lover's fault; consequently, understand me, she must be treated with the greatest respect." Then turning to the door, "Enter," said he; the door was hastily opened, the young girl made a step towards the regent, who started back thunder-struck.

"My daughter!" murmured he, endeavouring to regain his self-command, while Hélène, after looking round for Gaston, stopped and curtsied.

Dubois's face would not be easy to depict.

"Pardon me, monseigneur," said Hélène, "perhaps I am mistaken. I am seeking a friend who left me below, who was to come back to me; but, as he delayed so long, I came to seek for him. I was brought here, but perhaps the usher made a mistake."

"No, mademoiselle," said the duke, "M. de Chanlay has just left me, and I expected you."

As the regent spoke, the young girl became abstracted, and seemed as though taxing her memory; then, in answer to her own thoughts, she cried, —

"Mon Dieu! how strange."

"What is the matter?" asked the regent.

"Yes: that it is."

"Explain!" said the duke, "I do not understand you."

"Ah, monsieur!" said Hélène, trembling, "it is strange how your voice resembles that of another person."

"Of your acquaintance?" asked the regent.

"Of a person in whose presence I have been but once, but whose accents live in my heart."

"And who was this person?" asked the regent, while Dubois shrugged his shoulders at this half recognition.

"He called himself my father," replied Hélène.

"I congratulate myself upon this chance, mademoiselle," said the regent, "for this similarity in my voice to that of a person who is dear to you may give greater weight to my words. You know that Monsieur de Chanlay has chosen me for your protector?"

"He told me he would bring me to some one who would protect me from the danger —"

"What danger?" asked the regent.

Hélène looked round her, and her glance rested uneasily on Dubois, and there was no mistaking her expression. Dubois's face inspired her with as much distrust as the regent's did with confidence.

"Monseigneur," said Dubois (who did not fail to notice this expression), in an undertone to the regent, "I think I

am *de trop* here, and had better retire; you do not want me, do you?"

"No, but I shall presently; do not go away."

"I will be at your orders."

This conversation was too low for H  l  ne to hear; besides, she had stepped back, and continued watching the doors, in the hopes of seeing Gaston return.

It was a consolation to Dubois to know she would be disappointed.

When Dubois was gone, they breathed more freely.

"Seat yourself, mademoiselle," said the duke; "I have much to tell you."

"Monsieur, one thing before all. Is the Chevalier Gaston de Chanlay in any danger?"

"We will speak of him directly, but first of yourself; he brought you to me as a protector. Now, tell me against whom I am to protect you?"

"All that has happened to me for some days is so strange, that I do not know whom to fear or whom to trust. If Gaston were here —"

"Yes I understand; if he authorised you to tell me, you would keep nothing back. But if I can prove to you that I know nearly all concerning you?"

"You, monsieur!"

"Yes, I. Are you not called H  l  ne de Chaverny? Were you not brought up in the Augustine convent between Nantes and Clisson? Did you not one day receive an order to leave the convent from a mysterious protector who watches over you? Did you not travel with one of the sisters, to whom you gave a hundred louis for her trouble? At Rambouillet, did not a person called Madame Desroches await you? Did she not announce to you a visit from your father? The same evening, did not some one arrive who loved you, and who thought you loved him?"

"Yes, yes, monsieur, it is all true," said H  l  ne, astonished that a stranger should thus know the details of her history.

"Then the next day," continued the regent, "did not Monsieur de Chanlay, who followed you under the name of De Livry pay you a visit, which was vainly opposed by Madame Desroches?"

"You are right, monsieur, and I see that Gaston has told you all."

"Then came the order to leave for Paris. You would have opposed it, but were forced to obey. You were taken to a house in the Faubourg St. Antoine; but there your captivity became insupportable."

"You are mistaken, monsieur; it was not the captivity, but the prison."

"I do not understand you."

"Did not Gaston tell you of his fears, which I laughed at at first, but shared afterwards?"

"No, tell me what did you fear?"

"But if *he* did not tell you, how shall *I*?"

"Is there anything one cannot tell to a friend?"

"Did he not tell you that this man whom I at first believed to be my father—"

"Believed!"

"Yes; I swear it, monsieur. Hearing his voice, feeling my hand pressed by his, I had at first no doubt, and it almost needed evidence to bring fear instead of the filial love with which he at first inspired me."

"I do not understand you, mademoiselle; how could you fear a man who—to judge by what you tell me—had so much affection for you?"

"You do not understand, monsieur; as you say, under a frivolous pretext, I was removed from Rambouillet to Paris, shut in a house in the Faubourg Saint Antoine, which spoke more clearly to my eyes than Gaston's fears had done. Then I thought myself lost, — and that this feigned tenderness of a father concealed the wiles of a seducer. I had no friend but Gaston, — I wrote to him, — he came."

"Then," said the regent, filled with joy, "when you left that house it was to escape those wiles, not to follow your lover?"

"Oh, monsieur, if I had believed in that father whom I had seen but once, and then surrounded by mysteries, I swear to you that nothing would have led me from the path of duty."

"Oh, dear child!" cried the duke, with an accent which made Hélène start.

"Then Gaston spoke to me of a person who could refuse him nothing, — who would watch over me and be a father to me. He brought me here, saying he would return to me. I waited in vain for more than an hour, and at length, fearing some accident had happened to him, I asked for you."

The regent's brow became clouded.

"Thus," said he, "it was Gaston's influence that turned you from your duty, — his fears aroused yours?"

"Yes; he suspected the mystery which encircled me, and feared that it concealed some fatal project."

"But he must have given you some proof to persuade you."

"What proof was needed in that abominable house? Would a father have placed his daughter in such a habitation?"

"Yes, yes," murmured the regent, "he was wrong; but confess that without the chevalier's suggestions, you, in the innocence of your soul, would have had no suspicion."

"No," said Hélène, "but happily Gaston watched over me."

"Do you then believe that all Gaston said to you was true?" asked the regent.

"We easily side with those we love, monsieur."

"And you love the chevalier?"

"Yes; for the last two years, monsieur."

"But how could he see you in the convent?"

"By night, with the aid of a boat."

"And did he see you often?"

"Every week."

"Then you love him?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"But how could you dispose of your heart, knowing that you were not your own mistress?"

"For sixteen years I had heard nothing of my family; how could I suppose that all at once it would reveal itself, or rather, that an odious manœuvre should take me from my quiet retreat to my ruin?"

"Then you still think that that man lied, when he called himself your father?"

"I scarcely know what to think, and my mind becomes bewildered in contemplating this strange reality, which seems so like a dream."

"But you should not consult your mind here, Hélène," said the regent; "you should consult your heart. When you were with this man, did not your heart speak to you?"

"Oh!" said Hélène, "while he was there I was convinced, for I have never felt emotion such as I felt then."

"Yes," replied the regent, bitterly; "but when he was gone, this emotion disappeared, driven away by stronger influence. It is very simple, this man was only your father; Gaston was your lover."

"Monsieur," said Hélène, drawing back, "you speak strangely."

"Pardon me," replied the regent, in a sweet voice; "I see that I allowed myself to be carried away by my interest. But what surprises me more than all, mademoiselle," continued he, "is that, being beloved as you are by Gaston, you could not induce him to abandon his projects."

"His projects, monsieur! what do you mean?"

"What! you do not know the object of his visit to Paris?"

"I do not, monsieur. When I told him, with tears in my eyes, that I was forced to leave Clisson, he said he must also leave Nantes. When I told him that I was coming to Paris, he answered, with a cry of joy, that he was about to set out for the same place."

"Then," cried the regent, his heart freed from an enormous load, "you are not his accomplice?"

"His accomplice!" cried *Hélène*, alarmed; "ah, mon Dieu! what does this mean?"

"Nothing," said the regent, "nothing."

"Oh, yes, monsieur; you have used a word which explains all. I wondered what made so great a change in *Gaston*; why, for the last year, whenever I spoke of our future, his brow became dark; why, with so sad a smile, he said to me, '*Hélène*, no one is sure of the morrow;' why he fell into such reveries, as though some misfortune threatened him. That misfortune you have shown me, monsieur. *Gaston* saw none but malcontents there,—*Montlouis*, *Pontcalec*. Ah! *Gaston* is conspiring,—that is why he came to Paris."

"Then you knew nothing of this conspiracy?"

"Alas, monsieur! I am but a woman, and, doubtless, *Gaston* did not think me worthy to share such a secret."

"So much the better," cried the regent; "and now, my child, listen to the voice of a friend, of a man who might be your father. Let the chevalier go on the path he has chosen, since you have still the power to go no further."

"Who? I, monsieur!" cried *Hélène*; "I abandon him at a moment when you yourself tell me that a danger threatens him that I had not known! Oh, no, no, monsieur! We two are alone in the world, we have but each other. *Gaston* has no parents, I have none either; or if I have, they have been separated from me for sixteen years, and are accustomed to my absence. We may, then, lose ourselves together without costing any one a tear. Oh, I deceived you, monsieur! and whatever crime he has committed, or may commit, I am his accomplice."

"Ah!" murmured the regent, in a choking voice, "my last hope fails me; she loves him."

Hélène turned with astonishment towards the stranger who took so lively an interest in her sorrow. The regent composed himself.

"But," continued he, "did you not almost renounce him? Did you not tell him, the day you separated, that you could not dispose of your heart and person?"

"Yes, I told him so," replied the young girl, with exaltation, "because at that time I believed him happy, because I did not know that his liberty, perhaps his life, were compromised; then, my heart would have suffered, but my conscience would have remained tranquil; it was a grief to bear, not a remorse to combat; but since I know him threatened, unhappy, I feel that his life is mine."

"But you exaggerate your love for him," replied the regent, determined to ascertain his daughter's feelings. "This love would yield to absence."

"It would yield to nothing, monsieur; in the isolation in which my parents left me, this love has become my only hope, my happiness, my life. Ah! monsieur, if you have any influence with him,—and you must have, since he confides to you the secrets which he keeps from me,—in Heaven's name, induce him to renounce these projects of which you speak; tell him what I dare not tell him myself, that I love him beyond all expression; tell him that his fate shall be mine; that if he be exiled, I exile myself; if he be imprisoned, I will be so too; and that if he dies, I die. Tell him that, monsieur; and add—add that you saw, by my tears and by my despair, that I spoke the truth."

"Unhappy child!" murmured the regent.

Indeed, H  l  ne's situation was a pitiable one. By the paleness of her cheeks, it was evident that she suffered cruelly; while she spoke, her tears flowed ceaselessly, and it was easy to see that every word came from her heart, and that what she had said she would do.

"Well," said the regent, "I promise you that I will do all I can to save the chevalier."

H  l  ne was about to throw herself at the duke's feet, so humbled was this proud spirit by the thought of Gaston's danger, but the regent received her in his arms. H  l  ne

trembled through her whole frame, — there was something in the contact with this man which filled her with hope and joy. She remained leaning on his arm, and made no effort to raise herself.

“Mademoiselle,” said the regent, watching her with an expression which would certainly have betrayed him if Hélène had raised her eyes to his face, “Mademoiselle, the most pressing affair first. I have told you that Gaston is in danger, but not in immediate danger; let us then first think of yourself, whose position is both false and precarious. You are intrusted to my care, and I must, before all else, acquit myself worthily of this charge. Do you trust me, mademoiselle?”

“Oh, yes; Gaston brought me to you.”

“Always Gaston,” sighed the regent, in an undertone; then to Hélène he said, —

“You will reside in this house, which is unknown, and here you will be free. Your society will consist of excellent books, and my presence will not be wanting, if it be agreeable to you.”

Hélène made a movement as if to speak.

“Besides,” continued the duke, “it will give you an opportunity to speak of the chevalier.”

Hélène blushed, and the regent continued, —

“The church of the neighbouring convent will be open to you, and should you have the slightest fear, such as you have already experienced, the convent itself might shelter you, — the superior is a friend of mine.”

“Ah, monsieur,” said Hélène, “you quite reassure me; I accept the house you offer me, — and your great kindness to Gaston and myself will ever render your presence agreeable to me.”

The regent bowed.

“Then, mademoiselle,” said he, “consider yourself at home here; I think there is a sleeping-room adjoining this room, — the arrangement of the ground-floor is commodious, and this evening I will send you two nuns from

the convent, whom doubtless you would prefer to servants, to wait on you."

"Ah, yes, monsieur."

"Then," continued the regent, with hesitation, "then you have almost renounced your — father?"

"Ah, monsieur, do you not understand that it is for fear he should not be my father?"

"However," replied the regent, "nothing proves it; that house alone is certainly an argument against him, but he might not have known it."

"Oh," said Hélène, "that is almost impossible."

"However, if he took any further steps, if he should discover your retreat and claim you, or at least ask to see you."

"Monsieur, we would inform Gaston, and learn his opinion."

"It is well," said the regent, with a smile; and he held out his hand to Hélène, and then moved towards the door.

"Monsieur," said Hélène, in a scarcely audible voice.

"Do you wish for anything?" asked the duke, returning.

"Can I see him?"

The words seemed to die away on her lips as she pronounced them.

"Yes," said the duke, "but is it not better for your sake to do so as little as possible?"

Hélène lowered her eyes.

"Besides," said the duke, "he has gone on a journey, and may not be back for some days."

"And shall I see him on his return?"

"I swear it to you."

Ten minutes after, two nuns and a lay sister entered and installed themselves in the house.

When the regent quitted his daughter, he asked for Dubois, but he was told that, after waiting half an hour, Dubois had returned to the Palais Royal.

The duke, on entering the abbé's room, found him at

work with his secretaries; a portfolio full of papers was on the table.

"I beg a thousand pardons," said Dubois, on seeing the duke, "but as you delayed, and your conference was likely to be prolonged greatly, I took the liberty of transgressing your orders, and returning here."

"You did rightly; but I want to speak to you."

"To me?"

"Yes, to you."

"To me alone?"

"Alone."

"In that case, will monseigneur go into my cabinet, or into your own room?"

"Let us go into your cabinet."

The abbé made a respectful bow and opened the door; the regent passed in first, and Dubois followed when he had replaced the portfolio under his arm. These papers had probably been got together in expectation of this visit.

When they were in the cabinet, the duke looked round him.

"The place is safe?" asked he.

"Pardieu! each door is double, and the walls are two feet thick."

The regent sat down and fell into a deep reverie.

"I am waiting, monseigneur," said Dubois, in a few minutes.

"Abbé," said the regent, in a quick decided tone, as of a man determined to be answered, "is the chevalier in the Bastille?"

"Monseigneur," replied Dubois, "he must have been there about half an hour."

"Then write to M. Delaunay. I desire that he be set free at once."

Dubois did not seem surprised; he made no reply, but he placed the portfolio on the table, opened it, took out some papers, and began to look over them quietly.

"Did you hear me?" asked the regent, after a moment's silence.

"I did, monseigneur."

"Obey, then."

"Write yourself, monseigneur," said Dubois.

"And why?"

"Because nothing shall induce this hand to sign your highness's ruin," said Dubois.

"More words," said the regent, impatiently.

"Not words, but facts, monseigneur. Is M. de Chanlay a conspirator, or is he not?"

"Yes, certainly! but my daughter loves him."

"A fine reason for setting him at liberty."

"It may not be a reason to you, abbé, but to me it is, and a most sacred one. He shall leave the Bastille at once."

"Go and fetch him, then; I do not prevent you."

"And did you know this secret?"

"Which?"

"That M. de Livry and the chevalier were the same."

"Yes, I knew it. What then?"

"You wished to deceive me."

"I wished to save you from the sentimentality in which you are lost at this moment. The Regent of France—already too much occupied by whims and pleasures—must make things worse by adding passion to the list. And what a passion! Paternal love,—dangerous love! An ordinary love may be satisfied, and then dies away; but a father's tenderness is insatiable, and above all intolerable. It will cause your highness to commit faults which I shall prevent, for the simple reason that I am happy enough not to be a father; a thing on which I congratulate myself daily, when I see the misfortunes and stupidity of those who are."

"And what matters a head more or less?" cried the regent. "This De Chanlay will not kill me, when he knows it was I who liberated him."

"No; neither will he die from a few days in the Bastille, and there he must stay."

"And I tell you he shall leave it to-day."

"He must, for his own honour," said Dubois, as though the regent had not spoken; "for if he were to leave the Bastille to-day, as you wish, he would appear to his accomplices, who are now in the prison at Nantes, and whom I suppose you do not wish to liberate also, as a traitor and spy who has been pardoned for the information he has given."

The regent reflected.

"You are all alike," pursued Dubois, "you kings and reigning princes; a reason stupid enough, like all reasons of honour, such as I have just given, closes your mouth; but you will never understand true and important reasons of state. What does it matter to me or to France that Mademoiselle Hélène de Chaverny, natural daughter of the regent, should weep for her lover, Monsieur Gaston de Chanlay? Ten thousand wives, ten thousand mothers, ten thousand daughters, may weep in one year for their sons, their husbands, their fathers, killed in your highness's service by the Spaniard who threatens you, who takes your gentleness for weakness, and who becomes emboldened by impunity. We know the plot; let us do it justice. M. de Chanlay, chief or agent of this plot, coming to Paris to assassinate you,—do not deny it, no doubt he told you so himself,—is the lover of your daughter. So much the worse,—it is a misfortune which falls upon you, but may have fallen upon you before, and will again. I knew it all; I knew that he was beloved; I knew that he was called De Chanlay, and not De Livry; yes, I dissimulated, but it was to punish him exemplarily with his accomplices, because it must be understood that the regent's head is not one of those targets which any one may aim at through excitement or ennui, and go away unpunished if they fail."

"Dubois, Dubois, I shall never sacrifice my daughter's



life to save my own, and I should kill her in executing the chevalier; therefore no prison, no dungeon; let us spare the shadow of torture to him whom we cannot treat with entire justice; let us pardon completely; no half pardon, any more than half justice."

"Ah, yes; pardon, pardon; there it is at last. Are you not tired of that word, monseigneur? are you not weary of harping eternally on one string?"

"This time, at least, it is a different thing, for it is not generosity. I call heaven to witness that I should like to punish this man, who is more beloved as a lover than I as a father, and who takes from me my last and only daughter; but, in spite of myself, I stop, I can go no farther. Chanlay shall be set free."

"Chanlay shall be set free; yes, monseigneur; mon Dieu! who opposes it? Only it must be later, some days hence. What harm shall we do him? Diable! he will not die of a week in the Bastille; you shall have your son-in-law; be at peace; but do act so that our poor little government shall not be too much ridiculed. Remember that at this moment the affairs of the others are being looked into, and somewhat roughly too. Well, these others have also mistresses, wives, mothers. Do you busy yourself with them? No, you are not so mad. Think, then, of the ridicule if it were known that your daughter loved the man who was to stab you; the bastards would laugh for a month; it is enough to revive La Maintenon, who is dying, and make her live a year longer. Have patience, monseigneur, let the chevalier eat chicken and drink wine with Delaunay. Pardieu! Richelieu does very well there; he is loved by another of your daughters, which did not prevent you from putting him in the Bastille."

"But," said the regent, "when he is in the Bastille, what will you do with him?"

"Oh, he only serves this little apprenticeship to make him your son-in-law. But, seriously, monseigneur, do you think of raising him to that honour?"

"Oh, mon Dieu! at this moment I think of nothing, Dubois, but that I do not want to make my poor Hélène unhappy; and yet I really think that giving him to her as a husband is somewhat derogatory, though the De Chanlays are a good family."

"Do you know them, monseigneur? Parbleu! it only wanted that."

"I heard the name long ago, but I cannot remember on what occasion; we shall see; but, meanwhile, whatever you may say, one thing I have decided,—he must not appear as a traitor; and remember, I will not have him maltreated."

"In that case he is well off with M. Delaunay. But you do not know the Bastille, monseigneur. If you had ever tried it, you would not want a country house. Under the late king it was a prison: oh yes, I grant that, but under the gentle reign of Philippe d'Orléans, it is a house of pleasure. Besides, at this moment there is an excellent company there. There are fêtes, balls, vocal concerts; they drink champagne to the health of the Duc du Maine and the King of Spain. It is you who pay, but they wish aloud that you may die, and your race become extinct. Pardieu! Monsieur de Chanlay will find some acquaintances there, and be as comfortable as a fish in the water. Ah, pity him, monseigneur, for he is much to be pitied, poor fellow!"

"Yes, yes," cried the duke, delighted; "and after the revelations in Bretagne we shall see."

Dubois laughed.

"The revelations in Bretagne. Ah, pardieu! monseigneur, I shall be anxious to know what you will learn that the chevalier did not tell you. Do you not know enough yet, monseigneur? Peste! if it were me, I should know too much."

"But it is not you, abbé."

"Alas, unfortunately not, monseigneur, for if I were the Duc d'Orléans and regent, I would make myself cardinal.

But do not let us speak of that; it will come in time, I hope; besides I have found a way of managing the affair which troubles you."

"I distrust you, abbé. I warn you."

"Stay, monseigneur; you only love the chevalier because your daughter does?"

"Well?"

"But if the chevalier repaid her fidelity by ingratitude. Mon Dieu! the young woman is proud, monseigneur; she herself would give him up. That would be well played, I think."

"The chevalier cease to love Hélène! impossible; she is an angel."

"Many angels have gone through that, monseigneur; besides, the Bastille does and undoes many things, and one soon becomes corrupted there, especially in the society he will find there."

"Well, we shall see, but not a step without my consent."

"Fear nothing, monseigneur; and now will you examine the papers from Nantes?"

"Yes, but first send me Madame Desroches."

"Certainly."

Dubois rang and gave the regent's orders.

Ten minutes after Madame Desroches entered timidly; but instead of the storm she had expected, she received a smile and a hundred louis.

"I do not understand it," thought she; "after all, the young girl cannot be his daughter."

CHAPTER XXII.

IN BRETAGNE.

Our readers must now permit us to look backwards, for we have (in following the principal persons of our history) neglected some others in Bretagne who deserve some notice; besides, if we do not represent them as taking an active part in this tale, history is ready with her inflexible voice to contradict us; we must therefore, for the present, submit to the exigencies of history.

Bretagne had, from the first, taken an active part in the movement of the legitimated bastards; this province, which had given pledges of fidelity to monarchical principles, and pushed them to exaggeration, if not to madness, since it preferred the adulterous offspring of a king to the interests of a kingdom, and since its love became a crime by calling in aid of the pretensions of those whom it recognised as its princes, enemies against whom Louis XIV. for sixty years, and France for two centuries, had waged a war of extermination.

We have seen the list of the principal names which constituted this revolt; the regent had wittily said that it contained the head and tail; but he was mistaken,—it was the head and body. The head was the council of the legitimated princes, the King of Spain, and his imbecile agent, the Prince of Cellamare; the body was formed by those brave and clever men who were now in the Bastille; but the tail was now agitating in Bretagne amongst a people unaccustomed to the ways of a court, and it was a tail armed with stings like those of a scorpion, and which was the most to be feared.

The Bretagne chiefs then renewed the Chevalier de Rohan, under Louis XIV.; we say the Chevalier de Rohan, because to every conspiracy must be given the name of a chief.

Along with the prince, who was a conceited and commonplace man, and even before him, were two men, stronger than he, one in thought and the other in execution. These two men were Letréaumont, a Norman gentleman, and Affinius Van der Enden, a Dutch philosopher; Letréaumont wanted money, he was the arm; Affinius wanted a republic, he was the soul. This republic, moreover, he wanted enclosed in Louis XIV.'s kingdom, still further to annoy the great king, — who hated republicans even at a distance, — who had persecuted and destroyed the Pensioner of Holland, John de Witt, more cruel in this than the Prince of Orange, who, in declaring himself De Witt's enemy, revenged personal injuries, while Louis XIV. had received nothing but friendship and devotion from this great man.

Now Affinius wanted a republic in Normandy, and got the Chevalier de Rohan named Protector; the Bretons wished to revenge themselves for certain injuries their province had received under the regency, and they decreed it a republic, with the power of choosing a protector, even were he a Spaniard; but Monsieur du Maine had a good chance.

This is what passed in Bretagne.

The Bretons lent an ear to the first overtures of the Spaniards; they had no more cause for discontent than other provinces, but to them it seemed a capital opportunity for war, and they had no other aim. Richelieu had ruled them severely; they thought to emancipate themselves under Dubois, and they began by objecting to the administrators sent by the regent; a revolution always commences by a riot.

Montesquieu was appointed viceroy, to hold assemblies, to hear the people's complaints, and to collect their money. The people complained plentifully, but would not pay

because they did not like the steward; this appeared a bad reason to Montesquieu, who was a man of the old régime.

"You cannot offer these complaints to his majesty," said he, "without appearing to rebel; pay first, and complain afterwards; the king will listen to your sorrows, but not to your antipathies to a man honoured by his choice."

Monsieur de Montaran, of whom the Bretons complained, gave no offence; but, in being intendant of the province, any other would have been as much disliked, and they persisted in their refusal to pay.

"Monsieur le Maréchal," said their deputies, "your language might suit a general treating with a conquered place, but cannot be accepted by free and privileged men. We are neither enemies nor soldiers,—we are citizens and masters at home. In compensation of a service which we ask, namely, that Monsieur de Montaran, whom we dislike, should be removed, we will pay the tax demanded, but if the court takes to itself the highest prize, we will keep our money, and bear as we best can the treasurer who displeases us."

Monsieur de Montesquieu, with a contemptuous smile, turned on his heel,—the deputies did the same, and both retired with their original dignity.

But the marshal was willing to wait; he behaved himself as an able diplomatist, and thought that private reunions would set all right; but the Breton nobles were proud,—indignant at their treatment, they appeared no more at the marshal's reception; and he, from contempt, changed to angry and foolish resolves. This was what the Spaniards had expected. Montesquieu, corresponding with the authorities at Nantes, Quimper, Vannes, and Rennes, wrote that he had to deal with rebels and mutineers, but that ten thousand of his soldiers should teach the Bretons politeness.

The States were held again; from the nobility to the people in Bretagne is but a step; a spark lights the whole; the citizens declared to M. de Montesquieu that if he had

ten thousand men, Bretagne had a hundred thousand, who would teach his soldiers, with stones, forks, and muskets, that they had better mind their own business, and that only.

The marshal assured himself of the truth of this assertion, and was quiet, leaving things as they were for a while; the nobility then made a formal and moderate complaint; but Dubois and the council of the regency treated it as a hostile manifesto, and used it as an instrument.

Montaran, Montesquieu, Pontcalec, and Talhouet were the men really fighting amongst themselves. Pontcalec, a man of mind and power, joined the malcontents and encouraged the growth of the struggle.

There was no drawing back; the court, however, only saw the revolt, and did not suspect the Spanish affair. The Bretons, who were secretly undermining the regency, cried aloud, "No impost, no Montaran," to draw away suspicion from their anti-patriotic plots; but the event turned out against them. The regent—a skilful politician—guessed the plot without perceiving it; he thought that this local veil hid some other phantom, and he tore off the veil. He withdrew Montaran, and then the conspirators were unmasked; all the others were content and quiet, they alone remained in arms.

Then Pontcalec and his friends formed the plot we are acquainted with, and used violent means to attain their ends.

Spain was watching; Alberoni, beaten by Dubois in the affair of Cellamare, waited his revenge, and all the treasures prepared for the plot of Paris were now sent to Bretagne; but it was late; he did not believe it, and his agents deceived him; he thought it was possible to recommence the war, but then France made war on Spain. He thought it possible to kill the regent; but he, and not Chanlay, should do what no one would then recommend to the most cruel enemy of France. Alberoni reckoned on the arrival of a Spanish vessel full of arms and money, and this ship

did not arrive; he waited for news of Chanlay; it was La Jonquière who wrote, — and what a La Jonquière!

One evening Pontcalec and his friends had met in a little room near the old castle; their countenances were sad and irresolute. Du Couëdic announced that he had received a note recommending them to take flight.

"I have a similar one to show you," said Montlouis; "it was slid under my glass at table, and my wife, who expected nothing, was frightened."

"I neither expect nor fear anything," said Talhouet; "the province is calm, the news from Paris is good; every day the regent liberates some one of those imprisoned for the Spanish affair."

"And I, gentlemen," said Pontcalec, "must tell you of a strange communication I have received to-day. Show me your note, Du Couëdic, and you yours, Montlouis; perhaps it is the same writing, and is a snare for us."

"I do not think so, for if they wish us to leave this, it is to escape some danger; we have nothing to fear for our reputation, for that is not at stake. The affairs of Bretagne are known to the world: your brother Talhouet and your cousin have fled to Spain: Solduc, Rohan, Sanbilly the counsellor, have all disappeared, yet their flight was supposed to be natural, and from some simple cause of discontent. I confess, if the advice be repeated, I shall fly."

"We have nothing to fear, my friends," said Pontcalec, "our affairs were never more prosperous. See, the court has no suspicion, or we should have been molested already. La Jonquière wrote yesterday; he announces that De Chanlay is starting for La Muette, where the regent lives as a private gentleman, without guards, without fear."

"Yet you are uneasy," said Du Couëdic.

"I confess it, but not for the reason you suppose."

"What is it, then?"

"A personal matter."

"Of your own!"

"Yes, and I could not confide it to more devoted friends."

or any who know me better. If ever I were molested, — if ever I had the alternative of remaining or of flying to escape a danger, I should remain ; do you know why ? ”

“ No, speak.”

“ I am afraid.”

“ You, Pontcalec ? — afraid ! What do you mean by these words, after those you have just uttered ? ”

“ Mon Dieu ! yes, my friend ; the ocean is our safeguard ; we could find safety on board one of those vessels which cruise on the Loire from Paimbœuf to Saint Nazaire ; but what is safety to you is certain death to me.”

“ I do not understand you,” said Talhouet.

“ You alarm me,” said Moutlouis.

“ Listen, then, my friends,” said Pontcalec.

And he began, in the midst of the most scrupulous attention, the following recital ; for they knew that if Pontcalec were afraid there must be a good cause.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE SORCERESS OF SAVERNAY.

"I WAS ten years old, and I lived at Pontcalec, in the midst of woods, when one day my uncle Crysogon, my father, and I, resolved to have a rabbit hunt in a warren at five or six miles' distance, found seated on the heath a woman reading. So few of our peasants could read that we were surprised. We stopped and looked at her. I see her now, as though it were yesterday, though it is nearly twenty years ago. She wore the dark costume of our Breton women, with the usual white head-dress, and she was seated on a large tuft of broom in blossom which she had been cutting.

"My father was mounted on a beautiful bay horse, with a gold-coloured mane, my uncle on a gray horse, young and ardent, and I rode one of those little white ponies which to strength and activity unite the docility of a sheep.

"The woman looked up from her book at the group before her, and, seeing me firm in my stirrups near my father, who seemed proud of me, she rose all at once, and approaching me, said, —

" 'What a pity !'

" 'What do you mean ?' asked my father.

" 'It means that I do not like that white pony,' replied the woman.

" 'And why not ?'

" 'Because he will bring misfortune to your child, Sire de Pontcalec.'

"We Bretons are superstitious, you know ; so that even my father, who, you know, Montlouis, was an enlightened as

well as a brave man, stopped, in spite of my uncle Crysgon, who urged us to proceed, and, trembling at the idea of danger to me, he added, —

“‘Yet the pony is gentle, my good woman, and Clement rides well for his age. I have often ridden the little animal in the park, and its paces are perfect.’

“‘I do not know anything of that, Marquis de Guer,’ replied the woman, ‘but the little white horse will injure your son Clement, I tell you.’

“‘And how can you know this?’

“‘I see it,’ replied she, in a strange voice.

“‘When?’ asked my father.

“‘To-day.’

“My father turned pale, and I was afraid; but my uncle Crysgon, who had been in the Dutch wars, and had become somewhat hardened by combating the Huguenots, laughed till he nearly fell from his horse.

“‘Parbleu!’ said he, ‘this good woman certainly is in league with the rabbits at Savernay. What do you say to it, Clement: would you like to go home and lose the sport?’

“‘Uncle,’ I replied, ‘I would rather go on with you.’

“‘You look pale and odd, — are you afraid?’

“‘I am not afraid,’ said I.

“I lied, for I felt a certain shudder pass through me, which was very like fear.

“My father has since owned to me, that if it had not been for my uncle’s words, which caused a certain false shame in him, he would have sent me home or given my horse to one of the servants; but what an example for a boy of my age, who declared himself to have no fear, and what a subject for ridicule to my uncle.

“I continued, then, to ride my pony; we reached the warren, and the chase commenced.

“While it lasted, the pleasures made us forget the prediction; but the chase over, and having started on our road home, —

“‘Well, Clement,’ said my uncle, ‘still on your pony; you are a brave boy.’

“My father and I both laughed; we were then crossing a plain as flat and even as this room, no obstacles in the way, nothing that could frighten a horse, yet at that moment my pony gave a bound which shook me from my seat, then he reared violently and threw me off; my uncle laughed, but my father became as pale as death. I did not move, and my father leaped from his horse and came to me, and found that my leg was broken.

“To describe my father’s grief and the cries of the grooms would be impossible; but my uncle’s despair was indescribable. Kneeling by my side, removing my clothes with a trembling hand, covering me with tears and caresses, his every word was a fervent prayer. My father was obliged to console him, but to all his consolations and caresses he answered not.

“They sent for the first surgeon at Nantes, who pronounced me in great danger. My uncle begged my mother’s pardon all day long; and we remarked that, during my illness, he had quite changed his mode of life; instead of drinking and hunting with the officers—instead of going on fishing expeditions, of which he was so fond—he never left my pillow.

“The fever lasted six weeks, and the illness nearly four months; but I was saved, and retained no trace of the accident. When I went out for the first time, my uncle gave me his arm; but when the walk was over, he took leave of us with tears in his eyes.

“‘Where are you going, Crysogon?’ asked my father in astonishment.

“‘I made a vow,’ replied the good man, ‘that, if our child recovered, I would turn Carthusian, and I go to fulfil it.’

“This was a new grief. My father and my mother shed tears; I hung on my uncle’s neck, and begged him not to leave us; but the viscount was a man who never broke

a promise or a resolution. Our tears and prayers were vain.

“‘My brother,’ said he, ‘I did not know that God sometimes deigns to reveal Himself to man in acts of mystery. I doubted, and deserve to be punished; besides, I do not wish to lose my salvation in the pleasures of this life.’

“At these words the viscount embraced me again, mounted his horse, and disappeared. He went to the Carthusian monastery at Morlaix. Two years afterwards, fasts, macerations, and grief had made of this *bon vivant*, this joyous companion, this devoted friend, a premature skeleton. At the end of three years he died, leaving me all his wealth.”

“Diable! what a frightful tale,” said Du Couëdic; “but the old woman forgot to tell you that breaking your leg would double your fortune.”

“Listen,” said Pontcalec, more gravely than ever.

“Ah! it is not finished,” said Talhouet.

“We are only at the commencement.”

“Continue, we are listening.”

“You have all heard of the strange death of the Baron de Caradec, have you not?”

“Our old college friend at Nantes,” said Montlouis, “who was found murdered ten years ago in the forest of Châteaubriant?”

“Yes. Now listen; but remember that this is a secret which till this moment has been only known to me, and which even now must go no further than ourselves.”

The three Bretons, who were deeply interested, gave the required promises.

“Well,” said Pontcalec, “this college friendship of which Montlouis speaks had undergone some change between Caradec and myself, on account of a rivalry. We loved the same woman, and I was loved by her.

“One day I determined to hunt the stag in the forest of Châteaubriant; my dogs and huntsmen had been sent out the day before, and I was on my way to the rendezvous,

when, on the road before me, I saw an enormous faggot walking along. This did not surprise me, for our peasants carry such enormous faggots that they quite disappear under their load; but this faggot appeared from behind to move alone. Soon it stopped; an old woman, turning round, showed her face to me. As I approached, I could not take my eyes off her, for I recognised the sorceress of Savernay, who had predicted the misfortune caused by my white pony.

"My first impulse, I confess, was to take another road, and avoid the prophetess of evil; but she had already seen me, and she seemed to wait for me with a smile full of malice. I was ten years older than when her first threat had frightened me. I was ashamed to go back.

"'Good day, Viscount de Pontcalec,' said she; 'how is the Marquis de Guer?'

"'Well, good woman; and I shall be quite easy about him if you will assure me that nothing will happen to him during my absence.'

"'Ah! ah!' said she, laughing; 'you have not forgotten the plains of Savernay. You have a good memory, viscount; but yet, if I gave you some advice, you would not follow it any more than the first time. Man is blind.'

"'And what is your advice?'

"'Not to go hunting to-day.'

"'Why not?'

"'And to return at once to Pontcalec.'

"'I cannot; I have a rendezvous with some friends at Châteaubriant.'

"'So much the worse, viscount, for blood will be spilt.'

"'Mine?'

"'Yours, and another's.'

"'Bah! are you mad?'

"'So said your uncle Crysogon. How is he?'

"'Do you not know that he died seven years ago at Morlaix?'

"'Poor fellow!' said the woman, 'like you, he would not believe: at length he beheld, but it was too late.'

"I shuddered involuntarily; but a false shame whispered that it would be cowardly to give way, and that doubtless the fulfilment of the pretended witch's former prediction had been but a chance.

"'Ah! I see that a former experience has not made you wiser, my fine fellow,' said she. 'Well, go to Châteaubriant then, since you must have it so, but at least send back that handsome hunting-knife.'

"'And with what will monsieur cut the stag's foot?' asked the servant who followed me.

"'With your knife,' said the old woman.

"'The stag is a royal animal,' replied the servant, 'and deserves a hunting-knife.'

"'Besides,' said I, 'you said my blood would flow. What means that? — I shall be attacked, and if so I shall want it to defend myself.'

"'I do not know what it means,' replied the old woman; 'but I do know that in your place, my brave gentleman, I would listen to a poor old woman, and that I would not go to Châteaubriant; or, if I did go, it would be without my hunting-knife.'

"'Do not listen to the old witch, monsieur,' said the servant, who was doubtless afraid to take the fatal weapon.

"If I had been alone, I should have returned; but before my servant I did not like to do so.

"'Thank you, my good woman,' said I, 'but really I do not see what reason there is for not going to Châteaubriant. As to my knife, I shall keep it; if I be attacked I must have a weapon to defend myself.'

"'Go then and defend yourself,' said the old woman, shaking her head; 'we cannot escape our destiny.'

"I heard no more. I urged my horse to a gallop; but, turning a corner, I saw that the old woman had resumed her route, and I lost sight of her.

"An hour after I was in the forest of Châteaubriant; and I met you, Montlouis and Talhouet, for you were both of the party."

"It is true," said Talhouet, "and I begin to understand."

"And I," said Montlouis.

"But I know nothing of it," said Du Couëdic; "so pray continue, Pontcalec."

"Our dogs started the deer, and we set off in pursuit; but we were not the only hunters in the forest,—at a distance we heard the sound of another pack, which gradually approached; soon the two crossed, and some of my dogs by mistake went after the wrong deer. I ran after them to stop them, which separated me from you. You followed the rest of our pack; but some one had forestalled me. I heard the howls of my dogs under the lash of a whip; I redoubled my pace, and found the Baron de Caradec striking them. I told you there were causes of dislike between us, which only needed an opportunity to burst out. I asked him why he struck my dogs. His reply was haughtier than my question. We were alone—we were both twenty years of age—we were rivals—each was armed. We drew our knives, threw ourselves one upon the other, and Caradec fell from his horse, pierced through the body. To tell you what I felt when I saw him, bleeding and writhing in agony, would be impossible; I spurred my horse, and darted through the forest like a madman.

"I heard the voices of the hunters, and I arrived, one of the first, but I remember—do you remember it, Montlouis?—that you asked me why I was so pale."

"I do," said Montlouis.

"Then I remembered the advice of the sorceress, and reproached myself bitterly for neglecting it. This solitary and fatal duel seemed to me like an assassination. Nantes and its environs became insupportable to me, for every day I heard of the murder of Caradec. It is true that no one suspected me, but the secret voice of my conscience spoke so loud that twenty times I was on the point of denouncing myself.

"Then I left Nantes and went to Paris, but not until I had searched for the sorceress; not knowing either her name or her residence, I could not find her."

"It is strange," said Talhouet; "and have you ever seen her since?"

"Wait," said Pontcalec, "and listen, for now comes the terrible part. This winter—or rather last autumn—I say winter, because there was snow falling, though it was only in November—I was returning from Guer, and had ordered a halt at Pontcalec-des-Aulnes, after a day during which I had been shooting snipes in the marshes with two of my tenants. We arrived, benumbed with the cold, at the rendezvous, and found a good fire and supper awaiting us.

"As I entered, and received the salutations and compliments of my people, I perceived in the chimney-corner an old woman wrapped in a large gray and black cloak, who appeared to be asleep.

"'Who is that?' I asked of the farmer, and trembling involuntarily.

"'An old beggar, whom I do not know, and she looks like a witch,' said he; 'but she was perishing with cold, hunger, and fatigue. She came begging; I told her to come in, and gave her a piece of bread; which she ate while she warmed herself, and now she has gone to sleep.'

"The figure moved slightly in its corner.

"'What has happened to you, Monsieur le Marquis,' asked the farmer's wife, 'that you are so wet, and that your clothes are splashed with mud up to the shoulder?'

"'You nearly had to dine without me, my good Martine,' I replied, 'although this repast and this fire were prepared for me.'

"'Truly!' cried the good woman, alarmed.

"'Ah! monsieur had a narrow escape,' said the farmer.

"'How so, my good lord?'

"'You know your marshes are full of bogs; I ventured without sounding the ground, and all at once I felt that I was sinking in; so that, had it not been for my gun, which I held across, enabling your husband to come and pull me out, I should have been smothered, which is not only a cruel but a stupid death.'

“‘Oh, monsieur,’ said the wife, ‘pray do not expose yourself in this way!’”

“‘Let him alone,’ said the sepulchral voice of the figure crouched in the chimney-corner; ‘he will not die thus; I foretell that.’”

“And, lowering the hood of her gray cloak, she showed me the face of that woman who had twice crossed my path with sad prediction.

“‘I remained motionless and petrified.

“‘You recognise me?’ she asked, without moving.

“‘I made a sign of assent, but had not really the courage to reply. All gathered in a circle round us.

“‘No, no,’ continued she; ‘be easy, Marquis de Guer; you will not die thus.’”

“‘How do you know?’ I stammered out, with a conviction, however, that she did know.

“‘I cannot tell you, for I do not know myself; but you know well that I do not make mistakes.’”

“‘And how shall I die?’ asked I, making an effort over myself to ask this question and to listen to her reply.

“‘You will die by the sea. Beware of the water, Marquis de Guer!’ she replied.

“‘How?’ asked I. ‘What do you mean?’”

“‘I have spoken, and cannot explain further, marquis; but again I say, *Beware of the water!*’”

“All the peasants looked frightened; some muttered prayers, others crossed themselves; the old woman returned to her corner, buried herself again in her cloak, and did not speak another syllable.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE ARREST.

"THE details of this affair may some day escape my memory, but the impression it made will never be effaced. I had not the shadow of a doubt; and this prediction took the aspect of a reality, as far as I was concerned. Yes," continued Pontcalec, "even though you should laugh, like my uncle Crysogon, you would never change my opinion, or take away from me the conviction that the prediction will be realised; therefore, I tell you, were it true that we are pursued by Dubois's exempts, — were there a boat ready to take us to Belle Isle to escape them, so convinced am I that the sea will be fatal to me, and that no other death has any power over me, that I would give myself up to my pursuers, and say, 'Do your worst, I shall not die by your hands.'"

The three Bretons had listened in silence to this strange declaration, which gathered solemnity from the circumstances in which they stood.

"Then," said Du Couëdic, after a pause, "we understand your courage, my friend; believing yourself destined to one sort of death, you are indifferent to all other danger. But take care; if the anecdote were known, it would rob you of all merit, not in our eyes, for we know what you really are; but others would say that you entered this conspiracy because you can neither be beheaded, shot, nor killed by the dagger, but that it would have been very different if conspirators were drowned."

"And perhaps they would speak the truth," said Pontcalec, smiling.

"But, my dear marquis," said Montlouis, "we who have not the same grounds for security should, I think, pay some

attention to the advice of our unknown friend, and leave Nantes, or even France, as soon as possible."

"But this may be wrong," said Pontcalec; "and I do not believe our projects are known at Nantes or elsewhere."

"And probably nothing will be known till Gaston has done his work," said Talhouet, "and then we shall have nothing to fear but enthusiasm, and that does not kill. As to you, Pontcalec, never approach a seaport, never go to sea, and you will live to the age of Methuselah!"

The conversation might have continued in this jocular strain; but at this moment several gentlemen, with whom they had appointed a meeting, came in by different secret ways, and in different costumes.

It was not that they had much to fear from the provincial police, — that of Nantes, though Nantes was a large town, was not sufficiently well organised to alarm conspirators, who had in the locality the influence of name and social position, — but the police of Paris — the regent's police, or that of Dubois — sent down spies, who were easily detected by their ignorance of the place, and the difference of their dress and speech.

Though this Breton association was numerous, we shall only occupy ourselves with its four chiefs, who were beyond all the others in name, fortune, courage, and intelligence.

They discussed a new edict of Montesquieu's, and the necessity of arming themselves in case of violence on the marshal's part: thus it was nothing less than the beginning of a civil war, for which the pretexts were the impiety of the regent's court and Dubois's sacrileges, — pretexts which would arouse the anathemas of an essentially religious province against a reign so little worthy to succeed that of Louis XIV.

Pontcalec explained their plan, not suspecting that at that moment Dubois's police had sent a detachment to each of their dwellings, and that an exempt was even then on the spot with orders to arrest them. Thus, all who had taken part in the meeting saw, from afar, the bayonets of

soldiers at their houses ; and thus, being forewarned, they might probably escape by a speedy flight ; they might easily find retreats among their numerous friends ; many of them might gain the coast, and escape to Holland, Spain, or England.

Pontcalec, Du Couëdic, Montlouis, and Talhouet, as usual, went out together ; but, on arriving at the end of the street where Montlouis's house was situated, they perceived lights crossing the windows of the apartments, and a sentinel barring the door with his musket.

"Oh," said Montlouis, stopping his companions, "what is going on at my house ?"

"Indeed, there is something," said Talhouet ; "and just now I fancied I saw a sentinel at the Hôtel de Rouen."

"Why did you not say so ?" asked Du Couëdic ; "it was surely worth mentioning."

"Oh, I was afraid of appearing an alarmist, and I thought it might be only a patrol."

"But this man belongs to the regiment of Picardy," said Montlouis, stepping back.

"It is strange," said Pontcalec ; "let me go up the lane which leads to my house ; if that also be guarded, there will be no further doubt."

Keeping together, in case of an attack, they went on silently till they saw a detachment of twenty men grouped round Pontcalec's house.

"This passes a joke," said Du Couëdic, "and, unless our houses have all caught fire at once, I do not understand these uniforms around them ; as to me, I shall leave mine, most certainly."

"And I," said Talhouet, "shall be off to Saint-Nazaire, and from there to Le Croisic ; take my advice and come with me. I know a brig about to start for Newfoundland, and the captain is a servant of mine ; if the air on shore becomes too bad, we will embark, set sail, and *vogue la galères* ; come, Pontcalec, forget your old witch and come with us."

"No, no," said Pontcalec, "I will not rush on my fate.

Reflect, my friends: we are the chiefs, and we should set a strange example by flying before we even know if a real danger exists. There is no proof against us. La Jonquière is incorruptible; Gaston is intrepid; our letters from him say that all will soon be over; perhaps, at this very moment, France may be delivered and the regent dead. What would be thought of us if, at such a time, we had taken flight? The example of our desertion would ruin everything here. Consider it well; I do not command you as a chief, but I counsel you as a friend; you are not obliged to obey, for I free you from your oath, but in your place I would not go. We have given an example of devotion; the worst that can happen to us is to give that of martyrdom; but this will not, I hope, be the case. If we are arrested, the Breton parliament will judge us. Of what is it composed?—of our friends and accomplices. We are safer in a prison of which they hold the key, than on a vessel at the mercy of the winds; besides, before the parliament has assembled, all Bretagne will be in arms; tried, we are absolved; absolved, we are triumphant!”

“He is right,” said Talhouet; “my uncle, my brothers, all my family, are compromised with me. I shall save myself with them or die with him.”

“My dear Talhouet,” said Montlouis, “all this is very fine; but I have a worse opinion of this affair than you have. If we are in the hands of any one, it is Dubois, who is not a gentleman, and hates those who are. I do not like these people who belong to no class,—who are neither nobles, soldiers, nor priests. I like better a true gentleman, a soldier, or a monk: at least, they are all supported by the authority of their profession. However, I appeal, as we generally do, to the majority; but I confess that, if it be for flight, I shall fly most willingly.”

“And I,” said Du Couedic; “Montesquien may be better informed than we suppose; and if it be Dubois who holds us in his clutches, we shall have some difficulty in freeing ourselves.”

"And, I repeat, we must remain," said Pontcalec; "the duty of a general is to remain at the head of his soldiers; the duty of the chief of a conspiracy is to die at the head of the plot."

"My dear friend," said Montlouis, "your sorceress blinds you; to gain credence for her prediction, you are ready to drown yourself intentionally. I am less enthusiastic about this pythoiness, I confess; and as I do not know what kind of death is in store for me, I am somewhat uneasy."

"You are mistaken, Montlouis," said Pontcalec, "it is duty above all which influences me; and, besides, if I do not die for this, you will not, for I am your chief, and certainly before the judges I should reclaim the title which I have abjured to-day. If I do not die by Dubois, neither will you. We soldiers, and afraid to pay an official visit to parliament, for that is it, after all, and nothing else! benches covered with black robes, — smiles of intelligence between the accused and the judge: it is a battle with the regent; let us accept it, and when parliament shall absolve us, we shall have done as well as if we had put to flight all the troops in Bretagne."

"Montlouis proposed to refer it to a majority," said Du Couëdic, "let us do so."

"I did not speak from fear," said Montlouis; "but I do not see the use of walking into the lion's mouth if we can muzzle him."

"That was unnecessary, Montlouis," said Pontcalec; "we all know you, and we accept your proposition. Let those who are for flight hold up their hands."

Montlouis and Du Couëdic raised their hands.

"We are two and two," said Montlouis; "we must, then, trust to inspiration."

"You forget," said Pontcalec, "that, as president, I have two votes."

"It is true."

"Let those, then, who are remaining here hold up their hands."

Pontcalec and Talhouet raised their hands; thus the majority was fixed.

This deliberation in the open street might have seemed absurd, had it not involved in its results the question of life or death to four of the noblest gentlemen in Bretagne.

"Well," said Montlouis, "it appears, Du Couëdic, that we were wrong; and now, marquis, we obey your orders."

"See what I do," said Pontcalec, "and then do as you like."

And he walked straight up to his house, followed by his three friends.

Arriving at the door, he tapped a soldier on the shoulder.

"My friend," said he, "call your officer, I beg."

The soldier passed the order to the sergeant, who called the captain.

"What do you want?" asked the latter.

"I want to come into my house."

"Who are you?"

"I am the Marquis de Pontcalec."

"Silence!" said the officer, in a low voice, "and fly instantly, — I am here to arrest you." Then aloud, "You cannot pass," said he, pushing back the marquis, and closing in his soldiers before him.

Pontcalec took the officer's hand, pressed it, and said, —

"You are a brave fellow, but I must go in. I thank you, and may God reward you!"

The officer, surprised, opened his ranks, and Pontcalec, followed by his friends, crossed the court. On seeing him, his family uttered cries of terror.

"What is it?" asked the marquis, calmly; "and what is going on here?"

"I arrest you, Monsieur le Marquis," said an exempt of the Provost of Paris.

"Pardieu! what a fine exploit!" said Montlouis; "and you seem a clever fellow, — you, a provost's exempt, and absolutely those whom you are sent to arrest are obliged to come and take you by the collar."

The exempt saluted this gentleman, who joked so pleasantly at such a time, and asked his name.

"I am Monsieur de Montlouis. Look, my dear fellow, if you have not got an order against me, too, — if you have, execute it."

"Monsieur," said the exempt, bowing lower as he became more astonished, "it is not I, but my comrade, Duchevon, who is charged to arrest you; shall I tell him?"

"Where is he?"

"At your house, waiting for you."

"I should be sorry to keep you waiting long," said Montlouis, "and I will go to him. Thanks, my friend."

The exempt was bewildered.

Montlouis pressed Pontcalec's hand and those of the others; then, whispering a few words to them, he set out for his house, and was arrested.

Talhounet and Du Couelic did the same; so that by eleven at night the work was over.

The news of the arrest ran through the town, but every one said, "The parliament will absolve them."

The next day, however, their opinions changed, for there arrived from Nantes the commission, perfectly constituted, and wanting, as we have said, neither president, procureur du roi, secretary, nor even executioners. We use the plural, for there were three.

The bravest men are sometimes stupefied by great misfortune. This fell on the province with the power and rapidity of a thunder-stroke; it made no cry, no movement; Bretagne expired.

The commission installed itself at once, and expected that, in consideration of its powers, people would bow before it rather than give offence; but the terror was so great, that each one thought of himself alone, and merely deplored the fate of the others.

This, then, was the state of affairs in Bretagne three or four days after the arrest of Pontcalec and his three friends. Let us leave them awhile at Nantes, in Dubois's toils, and see what was passing in Paris.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE BASTILLE.

AND now, with the reader's permission, we will enter the Bastille, — that formidable building at which even the passing traveller trembled, and which, to the whole neighbourhood, was an annoyance and cause of alarm; for often at night the cries of the unfortunate prisoners who were under torture might be heard piercing the thick walls, so much so, that the Duchesse de Lesdequieres once wrote to the governor, that, if he did not prevent his patients from making such a noise, she should complain to the king.

At this time, however, under the reign of Philippe d'Orléans, there were no cries to be heard; the society was select, and too well bred to disturb the repose of a lady.

In a room in the Du Coin tower, on the first floor, was a prisoner alone; the room was large, and resembled an immense tomb lighted by two windows, furnished with an unusual allowance of bars and irons. A painted couch, two rough wooden chairs, and a black table, were the whole furniture; the walls were covered with strange inscriptions, which the prisoner consulted from time to time when he was over overcome by ennui.

He had, however, been but one day in the Bastille, and yet already he paced his vast chamber, examining the iron-barred doors, looking through the grated windows, listening, sighing, waiting. This day, which was Sunday, a pale sun silvered the clouds, and the prisoner watched with a feeling of inexpressible melancholy the walkers on the Boulevards. It was easy to see that every passer-by looked at the Bastille with a feeling of terror, and of self-gratulation at not being

within its walls. A noise of bolts and creaking hinges drew the prisoner from this sad occupation, and he saw the man enter before whom he had been taken the day before. This man, about thirty years of age, with an agreeable appearance and polite bearing, was the governor, M. Delaunay, father of that Delaunay who died at his post in '89.

The prisoner, who recognised him, did not know how rare such visits were.

"Monsieur de Chanlay," said the governor, bowing, "I come to know if you have passed a good night, and are satisfied with the fare of the house and the conduct of the employees,"—thus M. Delaunay, in his politeness, called the turnkeys and jailers.

"Yes, monsieur; and these attentions paid to a prisoner have surprised me, I own."

"The bed is hard and old, but yet it is one of the best, luxury being forbidden by our rules. Your room, monsieur, is the best in the Bastille; it has been occupied by the Duc d'Angoulême, by the Marquis de Bassompierre, and by the Maréchaux de Luxembourg and Biron; it is here that I lodge the princes when his majesty does me the honour to send them to me."

"It is an excellent lodging," said Gaston, smiling, "though ill furnished; can I have some books, some paper, and pens?"

"Books, monsieur, are strictly forbidden; but if you very much wish to read, as many things are allowed to a prisoner who is *ennuyé*, come and see me; then you can put in your pocket one of those volumes which my wife or I leave about; you will hide it from all eyes; on a second visit you will take the second volume, and to this abstraction we will close our eyes."

"And paper, pens, ink?" said Gaston, "I wish most particularly to write."

"No one writes here, monsieur; or, at least, only to the king, the regent, the minister, or to me; but they draw, and I can let you have drawing-paper and pencils."

"Monsieur, how can I thank you sufficiently for your kindness?"

"By granting me the request I came to make, for my visit is an interested one. I came to ask if you would do me the honour to dine with me to-day?"

"With you, monsieur! truly, you surprise me; however, I cannot tell you how sensible I am of your courtesy, and should retain for it an everlasting gratitude if I had any prospect but death before my eyes."

"Death! monsieur, you are gloomy; you should not think of these things — forget them and accept —"

"I do, monsieur."

"A la bonne heure," said the governor, bowing to Gaston, "I will take back your answer." And he went out, leaving the prisoner plunged in a new train of ideas.

The politeness which at first charmed the chevalier on reflection began to arouse some suspicion. Might it not be intended to inspire him with confidence, and lead him on to betray himself and his companions; he remembered the tragic chronicle of the Bastille, the snares laid for prisoners, and that famous dungeon chamber so much spoken of, which none who had entered ever left alive. Gaston felt himself alone and abandoned. He also felt that the crime he had meditated deserved death; did not all these flattering and strange advances conceal some snare? In fact, the Bastille had done its ordinary work; the prison acted on the prisoner, who became cold, suspicious, and uneasy.

"They take me for a provincial," he thought, "and they hope that — prudent in my interrogatories — I shall be imprudent in my conduct; they do not, they cannot, know my accomplices; and they hope that in giving me the means of communicating with them, of writing to them, or of inadvertently speaking of them, they will get something out of me. Dubois and D'Argenson are at the bottom of this."

Then Gaston thought of his friends who were waiting for

him without news from him, who would not know what had become of him, or, worse still, on some false news, might act and ruin themselves.

Then came the thought of his poor H  l  ne, isolated, as he himself was, whom he had not even presented to the Duc d'Olivares, her sole protector for the future, and who might himself be arrested or have taken flight. Then what would become of H  l  ne, without support, and pursued by that unknown person who had sought her even in the heart of Bretagne ?

In a paroxysm of despair at this thought, Gaston threw himself on his bed, cursing the doors and bars which imprisoned him, and striking the stones with his hands.

At this moment there was a noise at the door. Gaston rose hastily, and met M. d'Argenson with a law officer, and behind them an imposing escort of soldiers. He understood that he was to be interrogated.

D'Argenson, with his great wig, large black eyes, and dark shaggy eyebrows, made little impression on the chevalier ; he knew that in joining the conspiracy he sacrificed his happiness, and that in entering the Bastille he had sacrificed his life. In this mood it was difficult to frighten him. D'Argenson asked a hundred questions which Gaston refused to answer, replying only by complaints of being unjustly arrested, and demanding proof. M. d'Argenson became angry, and Gaston laughed in his face ; then D'Argenson spoke of the Breton conspiracy ; Gaston assumed astonishment, and listened to the list of his accomplices with the greatest *sang-froid*. When the magistrate had finished, he thanked him for giving him intelligence of events which were quite new to him. D'Argenson again lost patience, and gave his ordinary angry cough.

Then he passed from interrogatory to accusation.

"You wanted to kill the regent," said he, all at once, to the chevalier.

"How do you know that ?" asked Gaston, calmly.

"Never mind how, since I know it."

"Then I will answer you as Agamemnon did Achilles. Why ask, since you know it?"

"Monsieur, I am not jesting," said D'Argenson.

"Nor I," said Gaston; "I only quote Racine."

"Take care, monsieur, you may find this system of defence do you no good."

"Do you think it would be better to confess what you ask me?"

"It is useless to deny a fact which I am aware of."

"Then permit me to repeat my question: what is the use of asking me about a project of which apparently you are so much better informed than I am?"

"I want the details."

"Ask your police, which reads even people's most secret thoughts."

"Hum, hum!" said D'Argenson, in a tone which, in spite of Gaston's courage, made some impression on him, "what would you say if I asked news of your friend La Jonquière?"

"I should say," replied Gaston, turning pale, "that I hope the same mistake has not been made about him as about me."

"Ah!" said D'Argenson, "that name touches you, I think, — you know M. la Jonquière?"

"I know him as a friend, recommended to me to show me Paris."

"Yes, Paris and its environs, — the Palais Royal, the Rue du Bac, or La Muette: he was to show you all these, was he not?"

"They know all," thought Gaston.

"Well, monsieur," said D'Argenson, "can you find another verse from Racine which will serve as an answer to my question?"

"Perhaps I might, if I knew what you meant; certainly I wished to see the Palais Royal, for it is a curious place, and I have heard it much spoken of. As to the Rue du Bac, I know little of it; then there only remains La Muette, of which I know nothing."

"I do not say that you have been there; I say that La Jonquière was to take you there, — do you dare to deny it?"

"Ma foi, monsieur, I neither deny nor avow; I refer you to him; he will answer you if he thinks fit."

"It is useless, monsieur; he has been asked, and has replied."

Gaston felt a shudder pass through him. He might be betrayed, but he would divulge nothing. He kept silence.

D'Argenson waited a moment, then, seeing that Gaston remained silent, —

"Would you like to meet La Jonquière?" asked he.

"You can do with me as you please, monsieur?" said Gaston; "I am in your hands."

But at the same time he resolved, if he were to face La Jonquière, he would crush him beneath his contempt.

"It is well. As you say, I am the master, and I choose just now to apply the ordinary and the extraordinary question: Do you know what they are, monsieur?" said D'Argenson, leaning on each syllable.

A cold sweat bathed Gaston's temples, not that he feared to die, but torture was worse than death. A victim of the torture was always disfigured or crippled, and the best of these alternatives was a cruel one for a young man of five and twenty.

D'Argenson saw, as in a mirror, what was passing in Gaston's mind.

"Hola!" said the interrogator.

Two men entered.

"Here is a gentleman who seems to have no dislike to the question ordinary or extraordinary. Take him to the room."

"It is the dark hour, the hour I expected," murmured Gaston. "Oh, my God! give me courage."

Doubtless his prayer was heard, for, making a sign that he was ready, he followed the guards with a firm step.

D'Argenson came behind him.

They descended the stone staircase and passed the first dungeon in the tower. There they crossed two courts. As they crossed the second court, some prisoners, looking through their windows and seeing a gentleman well dressed, called out,—

“Hola ! monsieur, you are set free then ?”

A woman's voice added, —

“Monsieur, if you are asked about us when you are free from here, say that we said nothing.”

A young man's voice said, —

“You are happy, monsieur, — you will see her you love.”

“You are mistaken, monsieur,” said the chevalier. “I am about to suffer the question.”

A terrible silence succeeded. Then the sad procession went over the drawbridge. Gaston was placed in a closed and locked chair and taken to the arsenal, which was separated from the Bastille by a narrow passage.

D'Argenson had taken the lead, and awaited the prisoner, who found himself in a low room covered with damp. On the wall hung chains, collars, and other strange instruments ; chafing dishes stood on the ground, and crosses of Saint André were in the corner.

“You see this,” said D'Argenson, showing the chevalier two rings fastened into flagstones at six feet apart, and separated by a wooden bench about three feet high ; “in these rings are placed the head and feet of the patient ; then this tressel is placed under him, so that his stomach is two feet higher than his mouth ; then we pour pots of water holding two pints each into his mouth. The number is fixed at eight for the ordinary, ten for the extraordinary question. If the patient refuses to swallow, we pinch his nose so that he cannot breathe ; then he opens his mouth, then he swallows. This question,” continued he, emphasising every detail, “is very disagreeable, and yet I do not think I should prefer the boot. Both kill sometimes ; the boot disfigures the patient, and it is true that the water destroys his health for the future ; but it is rare, for the

prisoner always speaks at the ordinary question if he be guilty, and generally at the extraordinary, if he be not."

Gaston, pale and silent, listened and watched.

"Do you prefer the wedges, chevalier? Here, bring the wedges."

A man brought six wedges and showed them, still stained with blood and flattened at the edges by the blows which had been struck upon them.

"Do you know the way in which these are used? The knees and ankles of the patient are pressed between two wooden slabs as tightly as possible, then one of these men forces a wedge between the knees, which is followed by a larger one. There are eight for the ordinary torture, and two larger for the extraordinary. These wedges, I warn you, chevalier, break bones like glass, and wound the flesh insupportably."

"Enough, enough," said Gaston, "unless you wish to double the torture by describing it; but if it be only to guide my choice, I leave it to you, as you must know them better than I, and I shall be grateful if you will choose the one which will kill me most quickly."

D'Argenson could not conceal the admiration with which Gaston's strength of will inspired him.

"Come," said he, "speak, and you will not be tortured."

"I have nothing to say, monsieur, so I cannot."

"Do not play the Spartan, I advise you. One may cry, but between the cries one always speaks under torture."

"Try," said Gaston.

Gaston's resolute air, in spite of the struggle of nature — a struggle which was evidenced by his paleness, and by a slight nervous tremour which shook him — gave D'Argenson the measure of his courage. He was accustomed to this kind of thing, and was rarely mistaken. He saw that he should get nothing out of him, yet he persisted.

"Come, monsieur," said he, "it is still time. Do not force us to do you any violence."

"Monsieur," said Gaston, "I swear, before God, who

hears me, that if you put me to the torture, instead of speaking, I will hold my breath, and stifle myself, if the thing be possible. Judge, then, if I am likely to yield to threats, where I am determined not to yield to pain."

D'Argenson signed to the tormentors, who approached Gaston; but as they did so he seemed to gain new strength. With a calm smile, he helped them to remove his coat and to unfasten his cuffs.

"It is to be the water, then?" asked the man.

"The water first," asked D'Argenson.

They passed the cords through the rings, brought the tressels, filled the vases, — Gaston did not flinch.

D'Argenson reflected.

After about ten minutes' thought, which seemed an age to the chevalier, —

"Let him go," said D'Argenson, with a grunt of discontent, "and take him back to the Bastille."

CHAPTER XXVI.

HOW LIFE PASSED IN THE BASTILLE WHILE WAITING
FOR DEATH.

GASTON was inclined to thank the lieutenant of police, but he refrained. It might appear as though he had been afraid. He took his hat and coat, and returned to the Bastille as he had come.

"They did not like to put a man of high birth to the torture," thought he; "they will try me and condemn me to death."

But death seemed easy when divested of the preliminary agonies which the lieutenant of police had so minutely described.

On re-entering his room, Gaston saw, almost with joy, all that had seemed so horrible to him an hour before. The prison seemed gay, the view charming, the saddest inscriptions on the walls were madrigals compared to the menacing appearance of the room he had just quitted.

The major of the Bastille came to fetch him about an hour afterwards, accompanied by a turnkey.

"I understand," thought Gaston; "the governor's invitation is a pretext, in such a case, to take from the prisoner the anguish of expectation. I shall, doubtless, cross some dungeon, into which I shall fall and die. God's will be done." And, with a firm step, he followed the major, expecting every moment to be precipitated into some secret dungeon, and murmuring *Hélène's* name, that he might die with it on his lips.

But, no accident following this poetical and loving invocation, the prisoner quietly arrived at the governor's door.

M. Delaunay came to meet him.

"Will you give me your word of honour, chevalier," said he, "not to attempt to escape while you are in my house? It is understood, of course," he added, smiling, "that this parole is withdrawn as soon as you are taken back to your own room, and it is only a precaution to insure me a continuance of your society."

"I give you my word so far," said Gaston.

"'Tis well, monsieur, enter; you are expected."

And he led Gaston to a well-furnished room, where a numerous company was already assembled.

"I have the honour to present to you M. Le Chevalier Gaston de Chanlay," said the governor. Then naming, in turn, each of the persons assembled, —

"M. le Duc de Richelieu."

"M. le Comte de Laval."

"M. le Chevalier Dumesnil."

"M. de Malezieux."

"Ah," said Gaston, smiling, "all the Cellamare conspiracy."

"Except M. and Madame du Maine, and the Prince of Cellamare," said the Abbé Brigaud, bowing.

"Ah monsieur," said Gaston, in a reproachful tone, "you forget the brave D'Harmental and the learned Mademoiselle de Launay."

"D'Harmental is kept in bed by his wounds," said Brigaud.

"As to Mademoiselle de Launay," said the Chevalier Dumesnil, reddening with pleasure, "here she comes; she does us the honour of dining with us."

"Present me, monsieur," said Gaston; "amongst prisoners we must not make ceremonies; I reckon, therefore, on you."

And Dumesnil, taking Gaston by the hand, presented him to Mademoiselle de Launay.

Gaston could not repress a certain expression of astonishment at all he saw.

"Ah, chevalier," said the governor, "I see that, like three quarters of the inhabitants of Paris, you thought I devoured my prisoners."

"No, monsieur," said Gaston, "but I certainly thought for a moment that I should not have had the honour of dining with you to-day."

"How so?"

"Is it the habit to give your prisoners an appetite for their dinners by the walk I have had to-day?"

"Ah, yes," cried Mademoiselle de Launay, "was it not you who were being led to the torture just now?"

"Myself, mademoiselle; and be assured that only such a hindrance would have kept me from so charming a society."

"Ah, these things are not in my jurisdiction," said the governor; "thank Heaven, I am a soldier, and not a judge. Do not confound arms and the toga, as Cicero says. My business is to keep you here, and to make your stay as agreeable as possible, so that I may have the pleasure of seeing you again. M. d'Argenson's business is to have you tortured, hung, beheaded, put on the wheel, quartered, if possible; each to his task. Mademoiselle de Launay," added he, "dinner is ready, will you take my arm? Your pardon, Chevalier Dumesnil; you think me a tyrant, I am sure, but as host I am privileged. Gentlemen, seat yourselves."

"What a horrible thing a prison is," said Richelieu, delicately turning up his cuffs, "slavery, irons, bolts, chains."

"Shall I pass you this potage à l'écrevisses?" said the governor.

"Yes, monsieur," said the duke, "your cook does it beautifully, and I am really annoyed that mine did not conspire with me; he might have profited by his stay in the Bastille."

"There is champagne," said Delaunay, "I have it direct from Ai."

"You must give me the address," said Richelieu, "for if the regent leaves me my head, I shall drink no other wine than this. I have got accustomed to it during my sojourns here, and I am a creature of habit."

"Indeed," said the governor, "you may all take example by Richelieu; he is most faithful to me; and, in fact, unless we are overcrowded, I always keep his room ready for him."

"That tyrant of a regent may force us all to keep a room here," said Brigaud.

"Monsieur Delaunay," said Laval, in an angry tone, "permit me to ask if it was by your orders that I was awoke at two o'clock this morning, and the meaning of this persecution?"

"It is not my fault, monsieur; you must blame these gentlemen and ladies, who will not keep quiet, in spite of all I tell them."

"We!" cried all the guests.

"Certainly," replied the governor, "you all break through rules; I am always having reports of communications, correspondences, notes, etc."

Richelieu laughed, Dumesnil and Mademoiselle de Launay blushed.

"But we will speak of that at dessert. You do not drink, M. de Chanlay?"

"No, I am listening."

"Say that you are dreaming; you cannot deceive me thus."

"And of what?" asked Malezieux.

"Ah, it is easy to see that you are getting old, my poetical friend; of what should M. de Chanlay dream but of his love?"

"Is it not better, M. de Chanlay," cried Richelieu, "to have your head separated from your body, than your body from your soul?"

"Apropos," interrupted Laval, "is there any news from the court; how is the king?"

"No politics, gentlemen, if you please," said the gov-

error. "Let us discuss poetry, arts, war, and even the Bastille, if you like, but let us avoid politics."

"Ah, yes," said Richelieu, "let us talk of the Bastille. What have you done with Pompadour?"

"I am sorry to say he forced me to place him in the dungeon."

"What had he done?" asked Gaston.

"He had beaten his jailer."

"How long has it been forbidden for a gentleman to beat his servant?" asked Richelieu.

"The jailers are servants of the king, M. le Duc," said Delaunay, smiling.

"Say rather of the regent."

"A subtle distinction."

"A just one."

"Shall I pass you the chambertin, M. de Laval?"

"If you will drink with me to the health of the king."

"Certainly, if afterwards you will drink with me to the health of the regent."

"Monsieur," said Laval, "I am no longer thirsty."

"I believe it; you have just drunk some wine from his highness's cellar."

"From the regent's?"

"He sent it to me yesterday, knowing that I was to have the pleasure of your company."

"In that case," said Brigaud, throwing the contents of his glass upon the floor, "no more poison."

"Oh!" said Malezieux, "I did not know you were such a fanatic for the good cause."

"You were wrong to spill it, abbé," said Richelieu, "I know that wine, and you will hardly find such out of the Palais Royal; if it were against your principles to drink it, you should have passed it to your neighbour, or put it back in the bottle. 'Vinum in amphoram,' said my school-master."

"M. le Duc," said Brigaud, "you do not know Latin as well as Spanish."

"I know French still less, and I want to learn it."

"Oh! that would be long and tedious; better get admitted into the Academy, it would be far easier."

"And do you speak Spanish?" asked Richelieu of De Chanlay.

"Report says, monsieur, that I am here for the abuse of that tongue."

"Monsieur," said the governor, "if you return to politics I must leave the table."

"Then," said Richelieu, "tell Mademoiselle de Launay to talk mathematics; that will not frighten any one."

Mademoiselle de Launay started; she had been carrying on a conversation with Dumesnil, which had been greatly exciting the jealousy of Maison-Rouge, who was in love with her.

When dinner was over, the governor conducted each guest back to his own room, and when it came to Gaston's turn he asked M. Delaunay if he could have some razors, instruments which appeared necessary in a place where such elegant company was assembled.

"Monsieur le Chevalier," said the governor, "I am distressed to refuse you a thing of which I see the necessity; but it is against the rules for gentlemen to shave themselves unless they have special permission from the lieutenant of police. No doubt you will obtain the permission if you apply for it."

"But are those gentlemen whom I met here privileged, for they were well dressed and shaved?"

"No, they all had to ask permission; the Duc de Richelieu remained for a month with a beard like a patriarch."

"I find it difficult to reconcile such severity in detail with the liberty I have just seen."

"Monsieur, I also have my privileges, which do not extend to giving you books, razors, or pens, but which allow me to invite to my table such prisoners as I choose to favour, always supposing that it is a favour. True, it is

stipulated that I shall give an account of anything which is spoken against the government, but by preventing my guests from touching on politics, I avoid the necessity of betraying them."

"Is it not feared, monsieur," said Gaston, "that this intimacy between you and your prisoners should lead to indulgences on your part, which might be contrary to the intentions of the government?"

"I know my duty, monsieur, and keep within its strict limits; I receive my orders from the court, and my guests—who know that I have nothing to do with them—bear me no ill will for them. I hope you will do the same."

"The precaution was not unnecessary," said Gaston, "for doubtless I shall not long be left in the enjoyment of the pleasure I have had to-day."

"You have doubtless some protector at court?"

"None," said Gaston.

"Then you must trust to chance, monsieur."

"I have never found it propitious."

"The more reason that it should weary of persecuting you."

"I am a Breton, and Bretons trust only in God."

"Take that as my meaning when I said chance."

Gaston retired, charmed with the manners and attentions of M. Delaunay.

CHAPTER XXVII.

HOW THE NIGHT PASSED IN THE BASTILLE WHILE WAITING
FOR THE DAY.

GASTON had already, on the preceding night, asked for a light, and been told that it was against the rules; this night he did not renew the request, but went quietly to bed; his morning's visit to the torture-room had given him a lesson in philosophy.

Thus, rather from youthful carelessness than from force of will or courage, he slept quietly and soundly.

He did not know how long he had slept when he was awoken by the sound of a small bell, which seemed to be in his room, although he could see neither bell nor ringer; it is true that the room was very dark, even by day, and doubly so at that hour. The bell, however, continued to sound distinctly, but with caution, as though it were afraid of being heard. Gaston thought the sound seemed to come from the chimney.

He rose, and, approaching it gently, became convinced that he was right.

Presently he heard blows struck, under the floor on which he stepped, at regular intervals, with some blunt instrument.

It was evident that these were signals among the prisoners.

Gaston went to the window to raise the curtain of green serge which intercepted the rays of the moon, and in doing so he perceived an object hanging at the end of a string and swinging before the bars.

"Good," said he; "it appears that I shall have occupation; but each one in turn; regularity above all things; let us see what the bell wants, that was the first."

Gaston returned to the chimney, extended his hand, and soon felt a string, at the end of which a bell was hanging; he pulled, but it resisted.

"Good," said a voice, which came down the chimney, "you are there?"

"Yes," said Gaston; "what do you want?"

"Parbleu, I want to talk."

"Very well," said the chevalier, "let us talk."

"Are you not M. de Chanlay, with whom I had the pleasure of dining to-day?"

"Exactly so, monsieur."

"In that case I am at your service."

"And I at yours."

"Then have the goodness to tell me the state of the Bretagne affairs."

"You see they are in the Bastille."

"Good," said a voice, whose joyous tone Gaston could hear with ease.

"Pardon me," said Gaston, "but what interest have you in these affairs?"

"Why, when affairs are bad in Bretagne, they treat us well, and when they prosper we are treated badly; thus the other day, apropos of some affair, I do not know what, which they pretended was connected with ours, we were all put in the dungeon."

"Ah, diable!" said Gaston to himself, "if you do not know, I do." Then he added, aloud, "Well then, monsieur, be content, they are very bad, and that is perhaps the reason why we had the pleasure of dining together to-day."

"Eh, monsieur, are you compromised?"

"I fear so."

"Receive my excuses."

"I beg you, on the contrary, to accept mine; but I have a neighbour below who is becoming impatient, and who is

striking hard enough to break the boards of my floor; permit me to reply to him."

"Do so, monsieur; if my topographical calculations are correct, it must be the Marquis de Pompadour."

"It will be difficult to ascertain."

"Not so difficult as you suppose."

"How so?"

"Does he not strike in a peculiar manner?"

"Yes; has it a meaning?"

"Certainly; it is our method of talking without direct communication."

"Have the kindness to give me the key to the vocabulary."

"It is not difficult; every letter has a rank in the alphabet."

"Decidedly."

"There are twenty-four letters."

"I have never counted them, but no doubt you are right."

"Well, one blow for A, two for B, three for C, and so on."

"I understand, but this method of communication must be somewhat lengthy, and I see a string at my window which is getting impatient. I will strike a blow or two to show my neighbour that I have heard him, and then attend to the string."

"Go, monsieur, I beg, for if I am not mistaken that string is of importance to me; but first strike three blows on the floor, — in Bastille language that means patience; the prisoner will then wait for a new signal."

Gaston struck three blows with the leg of his chair, and the noise ceased.

He then went to the window.

It was not easy to reach the bars, but he at length succeeded in doing so and raising the string, which was gently pulled by some hand as a sign of acknowledgment.

Gaston drew the packet — which would scarcely pass the bars — towards him; it contained a pot of sweetmeats and a book. He saw that there was something written on the paper which covered the pot, but it was too dark to read it.

The string vibrated gently, to show that an answer was expected, and Gaston, remembering his neighbour's lesson, took a broom, which he saw in the corner, and struck three blows on the ceiling.

This, it will be remembered, meant patience.

The prisoner withdrew the string, freed from its burden.

Gaston returned to the chimney.

"Eh! monsieur," said he.

"All right, what is it?"

"I have just received, by means of a string, a pot of sweets and a book."

"Is not there something written on one of them?"

"About the book I do not know, but there is on the pot; unfortunately, it is too dark to read."

"Wait," said the voice, "I will send a light."

"I thought lights were forbidden."

"Yes, but I have procured one."

"Well, then send it, for I am as impatient as you to know what is written to me." And Gaston, feeling cold, began to dress himself.

All at once he saw a light in his chimney; the bell came down again transformed into a lantern.

This transformation was effected in the most simple manner, the bell turned upside down, so as to form a vessel, into which some oil had been poured, and in the oil burned a little wick.

Gaston found this so ingenious that for a moment he forgot both the pot and the book. "Monsieur," said he to his neighbour, "may I, without indiscretion, ask you how you procured the different objects with which you fabricated this lamp?"

"Nothing more simple, monsieur; I asked for a bell, which was given me, then I saved some oil from my breakfasts and dinners, till I had a bottle full; I made wicks by unravelling one of my handkerchiefs; I picked up a pebble when I was walking in the yard; I made some tinder with burnt linen; I stole some matches when I dined at the

governor's; then I struck a light with a knife, which I possess; and with the aid of which I made the hole through which we correspond."

"Receive my compliments, monsieur, you are a man of great invention."

"Thank you, monsieur; will you now see what book has been sent you, and what is written on the paper of the pot of sweetmeats."

"Monsieur, the book is a Virgil."

"That is it, — she promised it to me," cried the voice, in an accent of happiness which surprised the chevalier, who could not understand that a Virgil should be so impatiently expected.

"Now," said the prisoner with the bell, "pass on, I beg, to the pot of sweetmeats."

"Willingly," said Gaston, and he read: —

"MONSIEUR LE CHEVALIER, —

"I hear from the lieutenant of the prison that you occupy the room on the first floor, which has a window immediately below mine. Prisoners should aid and help each other; eat the sweetmeats, and pass the Virgil up to the Chevalier Dumesnil, whose chimney looks into the court."

"That is what is expected," said the prisoner with the bell; "I was told at dinner to-day that I should receive this message."

"Then you are the Chevalier Dumesnil?"

"Yes, monsieur, and your humble servant."

"I am yours," replied Gaston, "I have to thank you for a pot of sweetmeats, and I shall not forget my obligation."

"In that case, monsieur," replied the prisoner, "have the kindness to detach the bell, and fasten on the Virgil instead."

"But if you have not the light, you cannot read."

"Oh, I will make another lantern."

Gaston, who trusted to his neighbour's ingenuity, after the proofs he had had of it, made no further difficulties; he took the bell, which he placed in the neck of an empty bottle, and fastened on the Virgil, conscientiously replacing a letter which fell from between the leaves.

"Thank you, monsieur," said Dumesnil; "and now, if you will reply to your neighbour below?"

"You give me liberty?"

"Yes, monsieur; though presently I shall make an appeal to your good nature."

"At your orders, monsieur; you say, then, that for the letters —"

"One blow for A ; twenty-four for Z."

"Thank you."

The chevalier struck a blow with the handle of the broom, to give notice to his neighbour that he was ready to enter into conversation with him; it was instantly answered by another blow.

At the end of half an hour the prisoners had succeeded in saying this: —

"Good evening, monsieur; what is your name?"

"Thank you, monsieur; I am the Chevalier Gaston de Chanlay."

"And I, the Marquis de Pompadour."

At this moment Gaston, looking towards the windows, saw the string shaking convulsively.

He struck three blows, to ask for patience, and returned to the chimney.

"Monsieur," said he to Dumesnil, "I beg you to remember that the string at the window seems prodigiously *ennuyé*."

"Beg her to have patience; I will attend to her presently."

Gaston renewed the signal for patience on the ceiling, and then returned to the chimney, and the Virgil soon returned.

"Monsieur," said Dumesnil, "have the goodness to fasten the Virgil to the string; that is what she wants."

Gaston had the curiosity to see if Dumesnil had replied to Mademoiselle de Launay. He opened the Virgil; there was no letter, but some words were underlined in pencil, and Gaston read: "Meos amores," and "Carceris oblivio longa." He understood this method of correspondence, which consisted in underlining words which, placed together, made sense.

"Ah," said Gaston, fastening the book to the string, "it seems that I have become the postman."

Then he sighed deeply, remembering that he had no means of corresponding with Hélène, and that she was entirely ignorant what had become of him. This gave him sympathy for the attachment of Mademoiselle de Launay and the Chevalier Dumesnil. He returned to the chimney.

"Monsieur," said he, "your letter is despatched."

"A thousand thanks, chevalier. Now a word more, and I will leave you to sleep in peace."

"Oh, say whatever you wish, monsieur."

"Have you spoken with the prisoner below?"

"Yes."

"Who is he?"

"The Marquis de Pompadour."

"I thought so. What did he say?"

"'Good evening,' and asked who I was; he had no time to ask more; the method of communication is not as expeditious as it is ingenious."

"You must make a hole, and then you can talk as we do."

"What with?"

"I will lend you my knife."

"Thank you."

"It will serve to amuse you at least."

"Give it me."

"Here it is."

And the knife fell at Gaston's feet.

"Now, shall I send back the bell?"

"Yes; for my jailers might miss it to-morrow morning."

and you do not want light for your conversation with Pompadour."

"No; certainly not."

And the bell was drawn up.

"Now," said the chevalier, "you must have something to drink with your sweets, and I will send you a bottle of champagne."

"Thank you," said Gaston, "do not deprive yourself of it; I do not care much for it."

"Then when you have made the hole, you shall pass it to Pompadour, who is of a very different opinion. Stay, here it is."

"Thank you, chevalier."

"Good night."

"Good night."

And the string ascended.

Gaston looked for the string at the window, and saw that it had disappeared.

"Ah," sighed he, "the Bastille would be a palace for me, if my poor H  l  ne were in Mademoiselle de Launay's place."

Then he resumed a conversation with Pompadour, which lasted until three in the morning, and in which he told him that he was going to pierce a hole, that they might have more direct communication.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A COMPANION IN THE BASTILLE.

Thus occupied, Gaston was more uneasy than *ennuyé*; besides, he found another source of amusement. Mademoiselle de Launay, who obtained whatever she liked from the lieutenant, Maison-Rouge, provided her request were only accompanied by a sweet smile, obtained paper and pens; she had sent some to Dumesnil, who had shared them with Gaston, with whom he still communicated, and with Richelieu, with whom also he managed to correspond. Then Gaston formed the idea of making some verses to Hélène.

On his part, the Chevalier Dumesnil made some for Mademoiselle de Launay, who made them in return for him, so that the Bastille was a true Parnassus. There was only Richelieu who dishonoured the society by writing prose.

Time passed, as it will pass, even in the Bastille.

Gaston was asked if he would like to attend mass, and, as he was deeply religious, he had assented most gladly. The next day they came to fetch him.

The mass was celebrated in a little church, having, instead of chapels, separate closets, with bull's-eye windows into the choir, so that they could only see the officiating priest at the moment of elevation, and he could not see the prisoners at all.

Gaston saw M. de Laval and the Duc de Richelieu, who had apparently come to mass for the purpose of talking, for they knelt side by side, and kept up an incessant whispering. Monsieur de Laval appeared to have some important news to communicate, and kept looking at Gaston as though he were interested in it. As neither spoke to him,

however, except in the way of mere salutation, he asked no questions.

When the mass was over, the prisoners were taken back. As they crossed a dark corridor, Gaston passed a man who seemed to be an employee of the house. This man sought Gaston's hand, and slipped a paper into it, which he put quietly into his waistcoat pocket.

When he was alone in his own room he eagerly took it out. It was written on sugar paper, with the point of a sharpened coal, and contained this line, — "Feign illness from ennui."

It seemed to Gaston that the writing was not unknown to him, but it was so roughly traced that it was difficult to recognise. He waited for the evening impatiently, that he might consult with the Chevalier Dumesnil.

At night Gaston told him what had passed, asking him, as he had a longer acquaintance with the Bastille, what he thought of the advice of his unknown correspondent.

"Ma foi, though I do not understand the advice, I should follow it, for it cannot hurt you; the worst that can happen is that they may give you less to eat."

"But," said Gaston, "suppose they discover the illness to be feigned."

"Oh! as to that," replied Dumesnil, "the doctor is entirely ignorant, and will give you whatever you may ask for; perhaps they will let you walk in the garden, and that would be a great amusement."

Gaston consulted Mademoiselle de Launay, whose advice, by logic or sympathy, was the same as that of the chevalier; but she added, "If they diet you, let me know, and I will send you chicken, sweets, and Bordeaux."

Pompadour did not reply; the hole was not yet pierced.

Gaston then played the sick man, did not eat what they sent him, relying on his neighbour's liberality. At the end of the second day M. Delaunay appeared; he had been told that Gaston was eating nothing, and he found the prisoner in bed.

"Monsieur," he said, "I fear you are suffering, and have come to see you."

"You are too good, monsieur," said Gaston; "it is true that I am suffering."

"What is the matter?"

"Ma foi, monsieur, I do not know that there is any *amour propre* here; I am *ennuyé* in this place."

"What, in four or five days?"

"From the first hour."

"What kind of ennui do you feel?"

"Are there several?"

"Certainly, — one pines for his family."

"I have none."

"For his mistress."

Gaston sighed.

"For one's country."

"Yes," said Gaston, "it is that," seeing that he must say something."

The governor appeared to reflect.

"Monsieur," said he, "since I have been governor of the Bastille, my only agreeable moments have been those in which I have been of service to the gentlemen confided to my care by the king. I am ready to do anything for you if you will promise to be reasonable."

"I promise you, monsieur."

"I can put you in communication with one of your compatriots, or at least with a man who seems to know Bretagne perfectly."

"Is he a prisoner?"

"Like yourself."

A vague sentiment passed through Gaston's mind that it must be this man who had slipped the note into his hand.

"I should be very grateful if you would do this," said he.

"Well, to-morrow you shall see him; but as I am recommended to be strict with him, you can only remain with him an hour, and, as he may not quit his chamber, you must go to him."

"As you please, monsieur," said Gaston.

"Then it is decided; at five o'clock expect me or the major; but it is on one condition."

"What is it?"

"That in consideration of this distraction you will eat a little to-day."

"I will try."

Gaston ate a little chicken and drank a little wine to keep his promise.

In the evening he told Dumesnil what had passed.

"Ma foi," said he, "you are lucky; the Count de Laval had the same idea, and all he got was to be put into a room in the tower Du Tresor, where he said he was dreadfully dull, and had no amusement but speaking to the prison apothecary."

"Diable!" said Gaston, "why did you not tell me that before?"

"I had forgotten it."

This tardy recollection somewhat troubled Gaston; placed as he was between Pompadour, Dumesnil, and Mademoiselle de Launay, his position was tolerable; if he were to be removed, he would be really attacked by the malady he had feigned.

At the appointed time the major of the Bastille came, and led Gaston across several courts, and they stopped at the tower Du Tresor. Every tower had its separate name.

In the room number one was a prisoner asleep on a folding bed, with his back turned to the light; the remains of his dinner were by him on a worn-out wooden table, and his costume, torn in many places, indicated a man of low station.

"Ouais," said Gaston, "did they think that I was so fond of Bretagne that any fellows who happened to have been born at Nismes or at Penmarch may be raised to the rank of my Pylades? No, this fellow is too ragged, and seems to eat too much; but as one must not be too capricious in prison, let us make use of the hour. I will recount my

adventure to Mademoiselle de Launay, and she will put it into verse for the Chevalier Dumesnil."

Gaston was now alone with the prisoner, who yawned and turned in his bed.

"Ugh! how cold it is in this cursed Bastille," said he, rubbing his nose.

"That voice, that gesture, — it is he!" said Gaston, and he approached the bed.

"What," cried the prisoner, sitting up in bed, and looking at Gaston, "you here, M. de Chanlay?"

"Captain La Jonquière," cried Gaston.

"Myself, — that is to say, I am the person you name; but my name is changed."

"To what?"

"First Tresor."

"What?"

"First Tresor. It is a custom in the Bastille for the prisoner to take the name of his room, — that saves the turnkey the trouble of remembering names; however, if the Bastille be full, and two or three prisoners in the same room, they take two numbers; for example: I am first Tresor, if you were put here you would be first Tresor number two; another would be first Tresor number three. The jailers have a kind of Latin literature for this."

"Yes, I understand," said Gaston, watching La Jonquière intently; "then you are a prisoner?"

"Parbleu, you see for yourself; I presume we are neither of us here for pleasure."

"Then we are discovered."

"I am afraid so."

"Thanks to you."

"How to me?" cried La Jonquière, feigning surprise. "No jokes, I beg."

"You have made revelations, traitor!"

"I! come, come, young man, you are mad; you ought not to be in the Bastille, but in the Petites Maisons."

"Do not deny it, M. d'Argenson told me!"

"D'Argenson. Pardieu, the authority is good; and do you know what he told me?"

"No."

"That you had denounced me."

"Monsieur!"

"Well; what then? Are we to cut each other's throats because the police has followed out its trade and lied?"

"But how could he discover?"

"I ask the same of you. But one thing is certain; if I had told anything, I should not be here. You have not seen much of me, but you ought to know that I should not be fool enough to give information gratis; revelations are bought and sold, monsieur, and I know that Dubois pays high for them."

"Perhaps you are right," said Gaston; "but at least let us bless the chance which brings us together."

"Certainly."

"You do not appear enchanted, nevertheless."

"I am only moderately so, I confess."

"Captain!"

"Ah, monsieur, how bad-tempered you are."

"I?"

"Yes; you are always getting angry. I like my solitude; that does not speak."

"Monsieur!"

"Again. Now listen. Do you believe, as you say, that chance has brought us together?"

"What should it be?"

"Some combination of our jailers, — of D'Argenson's, or perhaps Dubois's."

"Did you not write to me?"

"I?"

"Telling me to fain illness from ennui."

"And how should I have written? — on what? — by whom?"

Gaston reflected; and this time it was La Jonquière who watched him.

people conspired from despair, as they marry when they have no other resource."

"When I joined the conspiracy I did not love."

"And afterwards?"

"I would not draw back."

"Bravo! that is what I call character. Have you been tortured?"

"No; but I had a narrow escape."

"Then you will be."

"Why so?"

"Because I have been; and it would be unfair to treat us differently. Look at the state of my clothes."

"Which did they give you?" asked Gaston, shuddering at the recollection of what had passed between D'Argenson and himself.

"The water. They made me drink a barrel and a half; my stomach was like a bladder; I did not think I could have held so much."

"And did you suffer much?" asked Gaston, with interest.

"Yes; but my temperament is robust, — the next day I thought no more of it. It is true that since then I have drunk a great deal of wine. If you have to choose, select the water, — it cleans. All the mixtures doctors give us are only a means of making us swallow water. Fangon says the best doctor he ever heard of was Doctor Sangrado; he only existed in Le Sage's brain, or he would have done miracles."

"You know Fangon?" asked Gaston, surprised.

"By reputation; besides, I have read his works. But do you intend to persist in saying nothing?"

"Doubtless."

"You are right. I should tell you, if you regret life so much as you say, to whisper a few words to M. d'Argenson, but he is a talker who would reveal your confession."

"I will not speak, be assured; these are points on which I do not need strengthening."

"I believe it; pardieu! you seem to me like Sardanapalus in your tower. Here I have only M. de Laval, who takes medicine three times a day, — it is an amusement he has invented. Well, tastes differ; and perhaps he wants to get accustomed to the water."

"But did you not say I should certainly be condemned?"

"Do you wish to know the whole truth?"

"Yes."

"Well, D'Argenson told me that you were."

Gaston turned pale, in spite of his courage. La Jonquière remarked it.

"However," said he, "I believe you might save yourself by certain revelations."

"Why, do you think I should do what you refused?"

"Our characters and our positions are different. I am no longer young, — I am not in love, — I do not leave a mistress in tears."

Gaston sighed.

"You see there is a great difference between us; when did you ever hear me sigh like that?"

"Ah! if I die, his excellency will take care of Héléne."

"And if he be arrested?"

"You are right."

"Then —"

"God will protect her."

"Decidedly you are young," said La Jonquière.

"Explain."

"Suppose his excellency be not arrested."

"Well."

"What age is he?"

"Forty-five or six, I suppose."

"And if he fell in love with Héléne; is not that her name?"

"The duke fall in love with her! he to whose protection I confided her! it would be infamous!"

"The world is full of infamy; that is how it gets on."

"Oh, I will not dwell on such a thought."

"I do not tell you to dwell on it; I only suggested it for you to make what use you liked of."

"Hush," said Gaston, "some one is coming."

"Have you asked for anything?"

"No."

"Then the time allowed for your visit is out," and La Jonquière threw himself quickly on his bed.

The bolts creaked, the door opened, and the governor appeared.

"Well, monsieur," said he to Gaston; "does your companion suit you?"

"Yes, particularly as I know Captain La Jonquière."

"That makes my task more delicate; but, however, I made you an offer, and I will not draw back. I will permit one visit daily, at any hour you please: shall it be morning or evening?"

Gaston looked at La Jonquière.

"Say five in the evening," said La Jonquière, quickly.

"In the evening at five o'clock, if you please."

"The same as to-day, then?"

"Yes."

"It shall be as you desire, monsieur."

Gaston and La Jonquière exchanged a glance, and the chevalier was taken back to his chamber.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE SENTENCE.

It was half-past six, and quite dark; the chevalier's first act on being left in his room was to run to the chimney.

"Chevalier," said he.

Dumesnil replied.

"I have paid my visit."

"Well?"

"I have found an acquaintance, if not a friend."

"A new prisoner."

"Of the same date as myself."

"His name?"

"Captain La Jonquière."

"What?"

"Do you know him?"

"Yes!"

"Then do me a favour: what is he?"

"Oh, an enemy of the regent's."

"Are you sure?"

"Quite; he was in our conspiracy, and only withdrew because we preferred abduction to assassination."

"Then he was —?"

"For assassination."

"That is it," murmured Gaston; "he is a man to be trusted."

"If it be the same I mean, he lives in the Rue Bourdonnais, at the Muids d'Amour."

"The same."

"Then he is a safe man."

"That is well," said Gaston, "for he holds the lives of four brave gentlemen in his hands."

"Of whom you are one."

"No, I put myself aside, for it seems all is over with me."

"How all is over?"

"Yes, I am condemned."

"To what?"

"To death."

There was a moment's silence.

"Impossible!" cried the Chevalier Dumesnil, at length.

"Why impossible?"

"Because, if I be not mistaken, your affair is attached to ours."

"It follows on it."

"Well?"

"Well."

"Our affairs prospering, yours cannot go wrong."

"And who says you are prospering?"

"Listen, for with you I will have no secrets."

"I am listening."

"Mademoiselle de Launay wrote me this yesterday. She was walking with Maison-Rouge, who, as you know, loves her, and at whom we both laugh, but who is useful to us. On pretext of illness, she asked, as you did, for a doctor; he told her that the prison doctor was at her orders. I must tell you that we have known this doctor intimately; his name is Herment.

"However, she did not hope to get much out of him, for he is a timid man; but when he entered the garden where she was walking, and gave her a consultation in the open air, he said to her, 'Hope!' In the mouth of any one else this would have been nothing, — in his it was a vast deal; since *we* are told to hope, *you* have nothing to fear, as our affairs are intimately connected."

"However," said Gaston, "La Jonquière seemed sure of what he said."

At this moment Pompadour knocked.

Gaston went to the hole, which, with the aid of his knife, he soon made practicable.

"Ask the Chevalier Dumesnil if he does not know anything more from Mademoiselle de Launay."

"About what?"

"One of us; I overheard some words between the governor and the major at my door: they were, 'condemned to death.'"

Gaston shuddered.

"Be easy, marquis; I believe they spoke of me."

"Diable! that would not make me easy at all; first, because we have quickly become friends, and I should be grieved if anything were to happen to you; and secondly, because what happened to you might well happen to us, our affairs being so similar."

"And you believe that Mademoiselle de Launay could remove your doubts."

"Yes, her windows look on the arsenal."

"Well."

"She would have seen if there were anything new going on there to-day."

"Ah! she is striking now."

At that moment Mademoiselle de Launay struck two blows, which meant attention.

Gaston replied by one, which meant that he was listening. Then he went to the window.

A minute after, the string appeared with a letter.

Gaston took the letter, and went to the hole to Pompadour.

"Well?" said the marquis.

"A letter," replied Gaston.

"What does she say?"

"I cannot see, but I will send it to Dumesnil, who will read it."

"Make haste."

"Pardon," said Gaston, "I am as anxious as you;" and he ran to the chimney.

"The string," he cried.

"You have a letter."

"Yes; have you a light?"

"Yes."

"Lower the string."

Gaston tied on the letter, which was drawn up.

"It is for you and not for me," said Dumesnil.

"Never mind, read it, and tell me what it is; I have no light, and it would lose time to send me one."

"You permit me?"

"Certainly."

A moment's silence.

"Well," said Gaston.

"Diable!"

"Bad news, is it not?"

"Judge for yourself."

And Dumesnil read: —

"MY DEAR NEIGHBOUR, —

"Some judge extraordinary has arrived at the arsenal this evening. I recognised D'Argenson's livery. We shall know more soon, when I see the doctor. A thousand remembrances to Dumesnil."

"That is what La Jonquière told me; it is I that am condemned."

"Bah, chevalier," said Dumesnil; "you are too easily alarmed."

"Not at all. I know well what to think, and then — Hark!"

"What!"

"Silence; some one is coming." And Gaston went away from the chimney.

The door opened, and the major and lieutenant, with four soldiers, came for Gaston, who followed them.

"I am lost," murmured he. "Poor Hélène."

And he raised his head with the intrepidity of a brave man, who, knowing death was near, went boldly to meet it.

"Monsieur," said D'Argenson, "your crime has been

examined by the tribunal of which I am the president. In the preceding sittings you were permitted to defend yourself; if you were not granted advocates, it was not with the intention of inquiring your defence, but, on the contrary, because it was useless to give you the extreme indulgence of a tribunal charged to be severe."

"I do not understand you."

"Then I will be more explicit. Discussion would have made one thing evident, even in the eyes of your defenders, — that you are a conspirator and an assassin. How could you suppose that, with these points established, indulgence would be shown you. But here you are before us, every facility will be given for your justification. If you ask a delay, you shall have it. If you wish researches, they shall be made. If you speak, you have the reply, and it will not be refused you."

"I understand, and thank the tribunal for this kindness," replied Gaston. "The excuse it gives me for the absence of a defender seems sufficient. I have not to defend myself."

"Then you do not wish for witnesses, delays, or documents?"

"I wish my sentence, — that is all."

"Do not be obstinate, chevalier; make some confessions."

"I have none to make, for in all my interrogatories you have not made one precise accusation."

"And you wish —"

"Certainly, — I should like to know of what I am accused."

"I will tell you. You came to Paris, appointed by the republican committee of Nantes, to assassinate the regent. You were referred to one La Jonquière, your accomplice, now condemned with you."

Gaston felt that he turned pale at these true accusations. "This might be true, monsieur," said he, "but you could not know it. A man who wishes to commit such a deed does not confess it till it be accomplished."

"No; but his accomplices confess for him."

"That is to say, that La Jonquière denounces me."

"I do not refer to La Jonquière, but the others."

"The others!" cried Gaston; "are there, then, others arrested beside La Jonquière and myself?"

"Yes. Messieurs de Pontcalec, de Talhouet, du Couëdic, and de Montlouis."

"I do not understand," said Gaston, with a vague feeling of terror, — not for himself, but for his friends.

"What! do you not understand that Messieurs de Pontcalec, de Talhouet, du Couëdic, and de Montlouis are now being tried at Nantes?"

"Arrested!" cried Gaston, "impossible!"

"Yes," said D'Argenson, "you thought that the province would revolt rather than allow its defenders — as you rebels call yourselves — to be arrested. Well, the province has said nothing. The province has gone on singing, laughing, and dancing, and is already asking where they will be beheaded, in order to hire windows."

"I do not believe you, monsieur," said Gaston, coldly.

"Give me that portfolio," said D'Argenson to a man standing behind him. "Here, monsieur," continued he, "are the writs of arrest. Do you doubt their authenticity?"

"That does not say that they have accused me."

"They told all we wanted to know, and your culpability is the result."

"In that case, if they have told all you want to know, you have no need of my confession."

"Is that your final answer?"

"Yes."

"Officer, read the sentence."

The officer read, —

"As the result of the investigation commenced on the 19th of February, that M. Gaston de Chanlay came from Nantes to Paris with the intention of committing the crime of murder on the person of his royal highness Mon-

seigneur the Regent of France, which was to have been followed by a revolt against the authority of the king, the extraordinary commission instituted to inquire into this crime has adjudged the Chevalier Gaston de Chanlay worthy of the punishment for high treason, the person of the regent being as inviolable as that of the king. In consequence — We ordain that the Chevalier Gaston de Chanlay be degraded from all his titles and dignities ; that he and his posterity be declared ignoble in perpetuity ; that his goods be confiscated, his woods cut down to the height of six feet from the ground, and he himself beheaded on the Grève, or wheresoever it shall please the provost to appoint, saving his majesty's pardon."

Gaston was pale, but still as marble. "And when am I to be executed?" asked he.

"As soon as it may please his majesty."

Gaston felt a cloud pass before his eyes, and his ideas became confused ; but this soon vanished, and the serenity of his bearing returned ; the blood rushed back to his cheeks, and a contemptuous smile settled on his lips.

"It is well, monsieur," said he ; "at whatever moment his majesty's order may arrive, it will find me prepared ; but I wish to know whether I may not see some persons who are very dear to me before I die, and I wish to ask a favour of the king."

D'Argenson's eyes glistened with malignant joy. "Monsieur," said he, "I told you that you would be treated with indulgence. You might therefore have spoken sooner, and perhaps his highness's kindness might not have waited for a prayer."

"You mistake me, monsieur," said Gaston, with dignity ; "neither his majesty's honour nor mine will suffer from the favour which I shall ask."

"What would you ask?" said D'Argenson ; "speak, and I will tell you at once if there be a chance of your request being granted."

"I ask, first, that my titles and dignities — which are not

very great — should not be cancelled, as I have no posterity. I am alone in the world; my name only survives me; but as that name is only noble, and not illustrious, it would not survive long."

"This is quite a royal favour, monsieur. His majesty alone can and will reply. Is that all you wish to ask?"

"No; I have another request to make, but I do not know to whom I should apply."

"First to me, monsieur, in my character of lieutenant of police. I shall see if I can grant it, or if I must refer it to his majesty."

"Well, then, monsieur, I desire to see Mademoiselle Hélène de Chaverny, ward of his excellency the Duc d'Olivarez, and also the duke himself."

D'Argenson, at his request, made a singular gesture, which Gaston interpreted as one of hesitation.

"Monsieur," said Gaston, "I would see them in any place, and for as short a time as may be thought advisable."

"You shall see them," said D'Argenson.

"Ah! monsieur," said Gaston, stepping forward as though to take his hand, "you lay me under the greatest obligation."

"On one condition, however, monsieur."

"What is it? there is no condition compatible with my honour that I will not accept in exchange for so great a favour."

"You must tell no one of your condemnation, and this on your word as a gentleman."

"I accede to that all the more willingly," said Gaston, "as one of the persons named would certainly die if she knew of it."

"Then all is well; have you anything further to say?"

"Nothing, monsieur, except to beg that you will record my denials."

"They are already firmly attached. Officer, hand the papers to Monsieur de Chanlay, that he may read and sign them."

Gaston sat down by a table, and, while D'Argenson and the judges chatted around him, he carefully perused the papers and the report of his own answers to the interrogatory, — then, finding all correct, he signed.

“Monsieur,” said he, “here are the documents. Shall I have the pleasure of seeing you again?”

“I do not think so,” said D'Argenson, with that brutality which was the terror of those who were subjected to him.

“Then to our meeting in another world, monsieur.”

The major led Gaston to his own room.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE FAMILY FEUD.

WHEN Gaston returned to his room, he was obliged to answer the questions of Dumesnil and Pompadour, who were waiting to hear news from him; but, in compliance with his promise made to D'Argenson, he did not mention his sentence, but simply announced a severer interrogatory than before; and as he wished to write some letters, he asked Dumesnil for a light. Dumesnil sent him a candle: things were progressing, it may be remarked; Maison-Rouge could refuse nothing to Mademoiselle de Launay, and she shared all with Dumesnil, who, in his turn, again shared with his neighbours, Gaston and Richelieu.

Gaston doubted whether, in spite of D'Argenson's promise, he would be allowed to see H  l  ne, but he knew that at least he should see a priest before he died; there could be no doubt that the priest would forward two letters for him.

As he began to write, Mademoiselle de Launay made a signal that she had something to send him; it was a letter. Gaston read:—

“Our friend — for you are our friend, and now we have no secrets from you — tell Dumesnil of the famous hope I conceived after the word that Herment said to me.”

Gaston's heart beat. Might not he also find in this letter some ground for hope? Had they not said that his fate could not be separated from the others? It is true that those who had said so did not know of his conspiracy.

He read on:—

“An hour ago the doctor came, accompanied by Maison-Rouge; from the latter's manner I drew the most favourable augury; however, when I asked to speak in private,

or, at least, to whisper to the doctor, he made some difficulties, which I removed with a smile. 'At least,' said he, 'no one must know that I am out of hearing. I should lose my place if it were known how weak I am.' This tone of love and interest combined seemed to me so grotesque that I laughingly promised him what he asked; you see how I keep my promise. He went to a distance, and Herment approached. Then commenced a dialogue, wherein the gestures meant one thing while the voice declared another. 'You have good friends,' said Herment; 'friends in good places, who are greatly interested for you.' I naturally thought of Madame du Maine. 'Ah, monsieur,' I cried, 'have you anything for me?' 'Hush,' said Herment. Judge how my heart beat."

Gaston felt his own beating vigorously.

"'And what have you to give me?' 'Oh, nothing myself; but you will have the object agreed upon.' 'But what is the object? Speak!' 'The beds in the Bastille are known to be bad, and particularly badly covered, and I am commissioned to offer you—' 'What?' 'A coverlet.' I burst out laughing; the devotion of my friends was shown in preventing my catching cold. 'My dear Monsieur Herment,' said I, 'in my present position it would be better if my friends were to occupy themselves less about my feet and more about my head.' 'It is a female friend,' said he. 'Who is it?' 'Mademoiselle de Charolais,' said Herment, lowering his voice so that I could scarcely hear him. Then he withdrew. I, my dear chevalier, am now waiting for Mademoiselle de Charolais's coverlet. Tell this to Dumesnil; it will make him laugh."

Gaston sighed. The gaiety of those around him weighed heavily on his heart. It was a new torture which they had invented, in forbidding him to confide his fate to any one; it seemed to him that he should have found consolation in the tears of his two neighbours. He had not the courage to read the letter to Dumesnil, so he passed it on to him, and a moment after heard shouts of laughter.

At this moment Gaston was saying adieu to Hélène.

After passing a part of the night in writing, he slept; at five and twenty one must sleep, even if it be just before death.

In the morning Gaston's breakfast was brought at the usual hour, but he remarked that it was more *recherché* than usual; he smiled at this attention, and as he was finishing the governor entered.

Gaston with a rapid glance interrogated his expression, which was calm and courteous as ever. Was he also ignorant of the sentence, or was he wearing a mask?

"Monsieur," said he, "will you take the trouble to descend to the council chamber?"

Gaston rose. He seemed to hear a buzzing in his ears, for to a man condemned to death every injunction which he does not understand is a torture.

"May I know the reason, monsieur?" asked Gaston, in so calm a tone that it was impossible to detect his real emotion.

"To receive a visit," replied the governor. "Yesterday, after the interrogatory, did you not ask the lieutenant of police to be allowed to see some one?"

Gaston started.

"And is it that person?" asked he.

"Yes, monsieur."

Gaston had asked for two persons; the governor only announced one; which one was it? He had not the courage to ask, and silently followed the governor.

Delaunay led Gaston to the council chamber; on entering, he cast an eager glance around, but the room was empty.

"Remain here, monsieur; the person whom you expect is coming," said the governor, who bowed and went out.

Gaston ran to the window, which was barred, and looked out,—there was a sentinel before it.

The door opened, and Gaston, turning round, faced the Duc d'Olivares.

"Ah, monsieur," cried he, "how good of you to come at the request of a poor prisoner."

"It was a duty," replied the duke; "besides, I had to thank you."

"Me!" said Gaston, astonished; "what have I done to merit your excellency's thanks?"

"You have been interrogated, taken to the torture chamber, given to understand that you might save yourself by naming your accomplices, and yet you kept silence."

"I made an engagement and kept it: that does not deserve any thanks, monseigneur."

"And now, monsieur, tell me if I can serve you in anything."

"First, tell me about yourself; have you been molested, monseigneur?"

"Not at all: and if all the Bretons are as discreet as you, I doubt not that my name will never be mentioned in these unfortunate debates."

"Oh, I will answer for them as for myself, monseigneur; but can you answer for La Jonquière?"

"La Jonquière!" repeated the duke.

"Yes. Do you not know that he is arrested?"

"Yes; I heard something of it."

"Well, I ask you, monseigneur, what you think of him?"

"I can tell you nothing, except that he has *my* confidence."

"If so, he must be worthy of it, monseigneur. That is all I wished to know."

"Then come to the request you had to make."

"Have you seen the young girl I brought to your house?"

"Mademoiselle Hélène de Chaverny? Yes."

"Well, monsieur, I had not time to tell you then, but I tell you now, that I have loved her for a year. The dream of that year has been to consecrate my life to her happiness. I say the dream, monseigneur; for, on awaking, I saw that all hope of happiness was denied me; and yet, to give this young girl a name, a position, a fortune, at the moment of my arrest she was about to become my wife."

"Without the knowledge of her parents or the consent of her family?" cried the duke.

"She had neither, monseigneur; and was probably about to be sold to some nobleman when she left the person who had been set to watch her."

"But who informed you that Mademoiselle Hélène de Chaverny was to be the victim of a shameful bargain?"

"What she herself told me of a pretended father, who concealed himself; of diamonds which had been offered to her. Then, do you know where I found her, monseigneur? In one of those houses destined to the pleasures of our *roués*. She, an angel of innocence and purity! In short, monseigneur, this young girl fled with me, in spite of the cries of her duenna, in broad daylight, and in the face of the servants who surrounded her. She stayed two hours alone with me; and, though she is as pure as on the day when she received her mother's first kiss, she is not the less compromised. I wish this projected marriage to take place."

"In your situation, monseigneur?"

"A still greater reason."

"But perhaps you may deceive yourself as to the punishment reserved for you."

"It is probably the same which, under similar circumstances, was inflicted on the Count de Chalais, the Marquis de Cinq-Mars, and the Chevalier Louis de Rohan."

"Then you are prepared even for death, monsieur?"

"I prepared for it from the day I joined the conspiracy: the conspirator's only excuse is, that, while robbing others of their lives, he risks his own."

"And what will this young girl gain by the marriage?"

"Monseigneur, though not rich, I have some fortune; she is poor; I have a name, and she has none. I would leave her my name and fortune; and with that intention I have already petitioned the king that my goods may not be confiscated, nor my name declared infamous. Were it known for what reason I ask this, it would doubtless be granted;

if I die without making her my wife, she will be supposed to be my mistress, and will be dishonoured, lost, and there will be no future for her. If, on the contrary, by your protection, or that of your friends (and that protection I earnestly implore), we are united, no one can reproach her, — the blood which flows for a political offence does not disgrace a family, — no shame will fall on my widow; and if she cannot be happy, she will at least be independent and respected. This is the favour which I have to ask, monseigneur; is it in your power to obtain it for me?"

The duke went to the door and struck three blows: Maison-Rouge appeared.

"Ask M. Delaunay, from me," said the duke, "whether the young girl who is at the door in my carriage may come in? Her visit, as he knows, is authorised. You will have the kindness to conduct her here."

"What! monseigneur; Hélène is here, — at the door?"

"Were you not promised that she should come?"

"Yes; but seeing you alone, I lost all hope."

"I wished to see you first, thinking that you might have many things to say which you would not wish her to hear; for I know all."

"You know all! What do you mean?"

"I know that you were taken to the arsenal yesterday."

"Monseigneur!"

"I know that you found D'Argenson there, and that he read your sentence."

"Mon Dieu!"

"I know that you are condemned to death, and that you were bound not to speak of it to any one."

"Oh, monseigneur, silence! One word of this would kill Hélène."

"Be easy, monsieur; but let us see; is there no way of avoiding *this execution*?"

"Days would be necessary to prepare and execute a plan of escape, and I scarcely have hours."

"I do not speak of escape ; I ask if you have no excuse to give for your crime ?"

"My crime!" cried Gaston, astonished to hear his accomplice use such a word.

"Yes," replied the duke ; "you know that men stigmatise murder with this name under all circumstances ; but posterity often judges differently, and sometimes calls it a grand deed."

"I have no excuse to give, monseigneur, except that I believe the death of the regent to be necessary to the salvation of France."

"Yes," replied the duke, smiling ; "but you will see that that is scarcely the excuse to offer to Philippe d'Orléans. I wanted something personal. Political enemy of the regent's as I am, I know that he is not considered a bad man. Men say that he is merciful, and that there have been no executions during his reign."

"You forget Count Horn."

"He was an assassin."

"And what am I ?"

"There is this difference : Count Horn murdered in order to rob."

"I neither can nor will ask anything of the regent," said Gaston.

"Not you personally, I know ; but your friends. If they had a plausible pretence to offer, perhaps the prince himself might pardon you."

"I have none, monseigneur."

"It is impossible, monsieur,—permit me to say so. A resolution such as you have taken must proceed from a sentiment of some kind,—either of hatred or vengeance. And stay ; I remember you told La Jonquière, who repeated it to me, that there was a family feud : tell me the cause."

"It is useless, monseigneur, to tire you with that ; it would not interest you."

"Never mind, tell it me."

"Well, the regent killed my brother."

"The regent killed your brother! how so? It is — impossible, Monsieur de Chanlay," said the Duc d'Olivares.

"Yes, killed; if from the effect we go to the cause."

"Explain yourself; how could the regent do this?"

"My brother, who, being fifteen years of age when my father died, three months before my birth, stood to me in the place of that father, and of mother, who died when I was still in the cradle, — my brother loved a young girl who was brought up in a convent by the orders of the prince."

"Do you know in what convent?"

"No; I only know that it was at Paris."

The duke murmured some words which Gaston could not hear.

"My brother, a relation of the abbess, had seen this young girl and asked her hand in marriage. The prince's consent to this union had been asked, and he made a pretence of granting it, when this young girl, seduced by her so-called protector, suddenly disappeared. For three months my brother hoped to find her, but all his searches were vain; he found no trace of her, and in despair he sought death in the battle of Ramillies."

"And what was the name of this girl!"

"No one ever knew, monseigneur; to speak her name was to dishonour it."

"It was doubtless she," murmured the duke, "it was Hélène's mother; and your brother was called —?" added he aloud.

"Olivier de Chanlay, monseigneur."

"Olivier de Chanlay!" repeated the duke, in a low voice, "I knew the name of De Chanlay was not strange to me." Then, aloud, "Continue, monsieur; I listen to you."

"You do not know what a family hatred is in a province like ours. I had lavished upon my brother all the love which would have fallen to the share of my father and mother, and now I suddenly found myself alone in the

world. I grew up in isolation of heart, and in the hope of revenge; I grew up amongst people who were constantly repeating, 'It was the Duc d'Orléans who killed your brother.' Then the duke became regent, the Breton league was therefore organised. I was one of the first to join it. You know the rest. You see that there is nothing in all this which has any interest for your excellency."

"You mistake, monsieur; unfortunately, the regent has to reproach himself with many such faults."

"You see, therefore," said Gaston, "that my destiny must be accomplished, and that I can ask nothing of this man."

"You are right, monsieur; whatever is done must be done without you."

At this moment the door opened and Maison-Rouge appeared.

"Well, monsieur?" asked the duke.

"The governor has an order from the lieutenant of police, to admit Mademoiselle Hélène de Chaverny; shall I bring her here?"

"Monseigneur," said Gaston, looking at the duke with an air of entreaty.

"Yes, monsieur," said he, "I understand — grief and love do not need witnesses — I will come back to fetch Mademoiselle Hélène."

"The permission is for half an hour," said Maison-Rouge.

"Then at the end of that time I will return," said the duke, and bowing to Gaston, he went out.

An instant after the door opened again, and Hélène appeared, trembling, and questioning Maison-Rouge, but he retired without replying.

Hélène looked round and saw Gaston, and for a few minutes all their sorrows were forgotten in a close and passionate embrace.

"And now —" cried Hélène, her face bathed in tears.

"Well! and now?" asked Gaston.

"Alas! to see you here — in prison," murmured Héléne, with an air of terror, "here, where I dare not speak freely, where we may be watched — overheard."

"Do not complain, Héléne, for this is an exception in our favour; a prisoner is never allowed to press one who is dear to him to his heart; the visitor generally stands against that wall, the prisoner against this, a soldier is placed between, and the conversation must be fixed beforehand."

"To whom do we owe this favour?"

"Doubtless to the regent; for yesterday, when I asked permission of Monsieur d'Argenson, he said that it was beyond his power to grant, and that he must refer it to the regent."

"But now that I see you again, Gaston, tell me all that has passed in this age of tears and suffering. Ah! tell me; but my presentiments did not deceive me; you were conspiring — do not deny it — I know it."

"Yes; Héléne, you know that we Bretons are constant both in our loves and our hatreds. A league was organised in Bretagne in which all our nobles took part — could I act differently from my brothers? I ask you, Héléne, could I, or ought I, to have done so? Would you not have despised me, if, when you had seen all Bretagne under arms, I alone had been inactive, — a whip in my hand while others held the sword?"

"Oh, yes! you are right; but why did you not remain in Bretagne with the others?"

"The others are arrested also, Héléne."

"Then you have been denounced — betrayed."

"Probably. But sit down, Héléne; now that we are alone, let me look at you, and tell you that you are beautiful, that I love you. How have you been in my absence? has the duke —"

"Oh! if you only knew how good he is to me; every evening he comes to see me, and his care and attention —"

"And," said Gaston, who thought of the suggestion of

the false La Jonquière, "nothing suspicious in those attentions?"

"What do you mean, Gaston?"

"That the duke is still young, and that, as I told you just now, you are beautiful."

"Oh, Heaven! no! Gaston, this time there is not a shadow of doubt; and when he was there near me — as near as you are now — there were moments when it seemed as if I had found my father."

"Poor child!"

"Yes, by a strange chance, for which I cannot account, there is a resemblance between the duke's voice and that of the man who came to see me at Rambouillet, — it struck me at once."

"You think so?" said Gaston, in an abstracted tone.

"What are you thinking of, Gaston?" asked Hélène; "you seem scarcely to hear what I am saying to you."

"Hélène, every word you speak goes to the inmost depth of my heart."

"You are uneasy, I understand. To conspire is to stake your life; but be easy, Gaston; I have told the duke that if you die I shall die too."

Gaston started.

"You are an angel," said he.

"Oh, my God!" cried poor Hélène, "how horrible to know that the man I love runs a danger, all the more terrible for being uncertain; to feel that I am powerless to aid him, and that I can only shed tears when I would give my life to save him."

Gaston's face lit up with a flush of joy; it was the first time that he had ever heard such words from the lips of his beloved; and under the influence of an idea which had been occupying him for some minutes, —

"Yes, dearest," said he, taking her hand, "you can do much for me."

"What can I do?"

"You can become my wife."

Hélène started.

"I your wife, Gaston?" cried she.

"Yes, Hélène; this plan, formed in our liberty, may be executed in captivity. Hélène, my wife before God and man, in this world and the next, for time and for eternity. You can do this for me, Hélène, and am I not right in saying that you can do much?"

"Gaston," said she, looking at him fixedly, "you are hiding something from me."

It was Gaston's turn to start now.

"I!" said he, "what should I conceal from you?"

"You told me you saw M. d'Argenson yesterday?"

"Well, what then?"

"Well, Gaston," said Hélène, turning pale, "you are condemned."

Gaston took a sudden resolution.

"Yes," said he, "I am condemned to exile; and, egotist as I am, I would bind you to me by indissoluble ties before I leave France."

"Is that the truth, Gaston?"

"Yes; have you the courage to be my wife, Hélène? to be exiled with me?"

"Can you ask it, Gaston?" said she, her eyes lighted with enthusiasm — exile — I thank thee, my God — I, who would have accepted an eternal prison with you, and have thought myself blessed — I may accompany, follow you? Oh, this condemnation is indeed a joy after what we feared! Gaston, Gaston, at length we shall be happy."

"Yes, Hélène," said Gaston, with an effort.

"Picture my happiness," cried Hélène; "to me France is the country where you are; your love is the only country I desire. I know I shall have to teach you to forget Bretagne, your friends, and your dreams of the future; but I will love you, so that it will be easy for you to forget them."

Gaston could do nothing but cover her hands with kisses.

"Is the place of your exile fixed?" said she; "tell me, when do you go? shall we go together?"

"My *Hélène*," replied Gaston, "it is impossible; we must be separated for a time. I shall be taken to the frontier of France—I do not as yet know which—and set free. Once out of the kingdom, you shall rejoin me."

"Oh, better than that, Gaston, — better than that. By means of the duke I will discover the place of your exile, and, instead of joining you there, I will be there to meet you. As you step from the carriage which brings you, you shall find me waiting to soften the pain of your adieux to France; and then, death alone is irretrievable; later, the king may pardon you; later still, and the action punished to-day may be looked upon as a deed to be rewarded. Then we will return; then nothing need keep us from Bretagne, the cradle of our love, the paradise of our memories. Oh!" continued she, in an accent of mingled love and impatience, "tell me, Gaston, that you share my hopes, that you are content, that you are happy."

"Yes, *Hélène*, I now am happy indeed; for now, and only now, I know by what an angel I am beloved. Yes, dearest, one hour of such love as yours, and then death would be better than a whole life with the love of any other."

"Well!" exclaimed *Hélène*, her whole mind and soul earnestly fixed on the new future which was opening before her, "what will they do? Will they let me see you again before your departure? When and how shall we meet next? Shall you receive my letters? Can you reply to them? What hour to-morrow may I come?"

"They have almost promised me that our marriage shall take place this evening or to-morrow morning."

"What! here in a prison," said *Hélène*, shuddering involuntarily.

"Wherever it may be, *Hélène*, it will bind us together for the rest of our lives."

"But suppose they do not keep their promise to you; suppose they make you set out before I have seen you."

"Alas!" said Gaston with a bursting heart, "that is possible, *Hélène*, and it is that I dread."

"Oh, mon Dieu! do you think your departure is so near?"

"You know, Hélène, that prisoners are not their own masters; they may be removed at any moment."

"Oh, let them come, — let them come; the sooner you are free, the sooner we shall be reunited. It is not necessary that I should be your wife in order to follow and join you. Do I not know my Gaston's honour, and from this day I look upon him as my husband before God. Oh, go proudly, Gaston, for while these thick and gloomy walls surround you I tremble for your life. Go, and in a week we shall be reunited; reunited, with no separation to threaten us, no one to act as spy on us, — reunited for ever."

The door opened.

"Great Heaven, already!" said Hélène.

"Madame," said the lieutenant, "the time has elapsed."

"Hélène," said Gaston, seizing the young girl's hand, with a nervous trembling which he could not master.

"What is it?" cried she, watching him with terror. "Good Heaven! you are as pale as marble."

"It is nothing," said he, forcing himself to be calm; "indeed it is nothing," and he kissed her hand.

"Till to-morrow, Gaston."

"To-morrow, — yes."

The duke appeared at the door; Gaston ran to him.

"Monseigneur," said he, "do all in your power to obtain permission for her to become my wife; but if that be impossible, swear to me that she shall be your daughter."

The duke pressed Gaston's hand; he was so affected that he could not speak.

Hélène approached. Gaston was silent, fearing she might overhear.

He held out his hand to Hélène, who presented her forehead to him, while silent tears rolled down her cheeks; Gaston closed his eyes, that the sight of her tears might not call up his own.

At length they must part. They exchanged one last lingering glance, and the duke pressed Gaston's hand.

How strange was this sympathy between two men, one of whom had come so far for the sole purpose of killing the other!

The door closed, and Gaston sank down on a seat, utterly broken and exhausted.

In ten minutes the governor entered; he came to conduct Gaston back to his own room.

Gaston followed him silently, and, when asked if there was anything he wanted, he mournfully shook his head.

At night Mademoiselle de Launay signalled that she had something to communicate.

Gaston opened the window, and received a letter enclosing another.

The first was for himself.

He read:

"DEAR NEIGHBOUR, —

"The coverlid was not so contemptible as I supposed; it contained a little paper on which was written the word already spoken by Herment, 'Hope!' It also enclosed this letter for M. de Richelieu; send it to Dumesnil, who will pass it to the duke.

"Your servant,

"DE LAUNAY."

"Alas!" thought Gaston, "they will miss me when I am gone," and he called Dumesnil, to whom he passed the letter.

CHAPTER XXXI.

STATE AFFAIRS AND FAMILY AFFAIRS.

ON leaving the Bastille, the duke took Hélène home, promising to come and see her as usual in the evening; a promise which Hélène would have estimated all the more highly if she had known that his highness had a *bal masqué* at Monceaux.

On re-entering the Palais Royal the duke asked for Dubois, and was told he was in his study, working. The duke entered without allowing himself to be announced. Dubois was so busy that he did not hear the duke, who advanced and looked over his shoulder, to see what was occupying him so intently.

He was writing down names, with notes by the side of each.

"What are you doing there, abbé?" asked the regent.

"Ah! monseigneur, it is you; pardon; I did not hear you."

"I asked what you were doing?"

"Signing the burial tickets for our Breton friends."

"But their fate is not yet decided, and the sentence of the commission —"

"I know it," said Dubois.

"Is it given, then?"

"No, but I dictated it before they went."

"Do you know that your conduct is odious?"

"Truly, monseigneur, you are insupportable. Manage your family affairs, and leave state affairs to me."

"Family affairs!"

"Ah! as to those, I hope you are satisfied with me, or you would indeed be difficult to please. You recommend to me M. de Chanlay, and on your recommendation, I make it a rose-water Bastille to him; sumptuous repasts, a charming governor. I let him pierce holes in your floors, and spoil your walls, all which will cost us a great deal to repair. Since his entrance it is quite a fête. Dumesnil talks all day through his chimney, Mademoiselle de Launay fishes with a line through her window, Pompadour drinks champagne. There is nothing to be said to all this; these are your family affairs; but in Bretagne you have nothing to see, and I forbid you to look, monseigneur, unless you have a few more unknown daughters there, which is possible."

"Dubois! scoundrel!"

"Ah! you think when you have said 'Dubois,' and added 'scoundrel' to my name, you have done everything. Well, scoundrel as much as you please; meanwhile, but for the scoundrel you would have been assassinated."

"Well, what then?"

"What then? Hear the statesman! Well, then, I should be hung, perhaps, which is a consideration; then Madame de Maintenon would be Regent of France! What a joke! What then, indeed! To think that a philosophic prince should utter such *naïvetés*! Oh, Marcus Aurelius! was it not he who said, 'Populos esse demum felices si reges philosophi forent, aut philosophi reges'? Here is a sample."

Dubois still wrote on.

"Dubois, you do not know this young man."

"What young man?"

"The chevalier."

"Really! you shall present him to me when he is your son-in-law."

"That will be to-morrow, Dubois."

The abbé looked round in astonishment, and looking at the regent with his little eyes as wide open as possible, —

"Ah, monseigneur, are you mad?" he said.

"No, but he is an honourable man, and you know that they are rare."

"Honourable man! Ah, you have a strange idea of honour."

"Yes; I believe that we differ in our ideas of it."

"What has this honourable man done? Has he poisoned the dagger with which he meant to assassinate you? for then he would be more than an honourable man, he would be a saint. We have already St. Jacques Clément, St. Ravaillac; St. Gaston is wanting in the calendar. Quick, quick, monseigneur! you who will not ask the Pope to give a cardinal's hat to your minister, ask him to canonise your assassin; and for the first time in your life you would be logical."

"Dubois, I tell you there are few capable of doing what this young man has done."

"Peste! that is lucky; if there were ten in France I should certainly resign."

"I do not speak of what he wished to do, but of what he has done."

"Well, what has he done? I should like to be edified."

"First, he kept his oath to D'Argenson."

"I doubt it not, he is faithful to his word; and but for me would have kept his word also with Pontcalec, Talhouet, etc."

"Yes, but one was more difficult than the other. He had sworn not to mention his sentence to any one, and he did not speak of it to his mistress."

"Nor to you?"

"He spoke of it to me, because I told him that I knew it. He forbade me to ask anything of the regent, desiring, he said, but one favour."

"And that one?"

"To marry Hélène, in order to leave her a fortune and a name."

"Good; he wants to leave your daughter a fortune and a name; he is polite, at least."

"Do you forget that this is a secret from him?"

"Who knows?"

"Dubois, I do not know in what your hands were steeped the day you were born, but I know that you sully everything you touch."

"Except conspirators, monseigneur, for it seems to me that there, on the contrary, I purify. Look at those of Cellamare, how all that affair was cleared out; Dubois here, Dubois there, I hope the apothecary has properly purged France from Spain. Well, it shall be the same with Olivares as with Cellamare. There is now only Bretagne congested; a good dose, and all will be right."

"Dubois, you would joke with the Gospel."

"Pardieu! I began by that."

The regent rose.

"Come, monseigneur, I was wrong; I forgot you were fasting; let us hear the end of this story."

"The end is that I promised to ask this favour from the regent, and that the regent will grant it."

"The regent will commit a folly."

"No, he will only repair a fault."

"Ah, now you find you have a reparation to make to M. de Chanlay."

"Not to him, but to his brother."

"Still better. What have you done to his brother?"

"I took from him the woman he loved."

"Who?"

"Hélène's mother."

"Well, that time you were wrong; for if you had let her alone we should not have had all this tiresome affair on our hands."

"But we have it, and must now get out of it as well as possible."

"Just what I am working at; and when is the marriage to take place?"

"To-morrow."

"In the chapel of the Palais Royal? You shall dress

in the costume of a knight of the order; you shall extend both hands over your son-in-law's head — one more than he meant to have held over you — it will be very affecting."

"No, abbé, it shall not be thus; they shall be married in the Bastille, and I shall be in the chapel where they cannot see me."

"Well, monseigneur, I should like to be with you. I should like to see the ceremony; I believe these kind of things are very touching."

"No, you would be in the way, and your ugly face would betray my incognito."

"Your handsome face is still more easy to recognise, monseigneur," said Dubois, bowing; "there are portraits of Henry the Fourth and Louis the Fourteenth in the Bastille."

"You flatter me."

"Are you going away, monseigneur?"

"Yes, I have an appointment with Delaunay."

"The governor of the Bastille?"

"Yes."

"Go, monseigneur, go."

"Shall I see you to-night at Morceaux?"

"Perhaps."

"Have you a disguise?"

"I have La Jonquière's dress."

"Oh! that is only fit for the Rue du Bac."

"Monseigneur forgets the Bastille, where it has had some success."

"Well, adieu, abbé."

"Adieu, monseigneur."

When Dubois was left alone he appeared to take some sudden resolution. He rang the bell, and a servant entered.

"M. Delaunay is coming to the regent; watch him, and bring him here afterwards."

The servant retired without a reply, and Dubois resumed his work.

Half an hour afterwards the door opened, and the servant announced Delaunay. Dubois gave him a note.

"Read that," said he; "I give you written instructions, that there may be no pretext for neglecting them."

"Ah, monseigneur," said Delaunay, "you would ruin me."

"How so?"

"To-morrow when it becomes known."

"Who will tell it? will you?"

"No, but monseigneur —"

"Will be enchanted; I answer for him."

"A governor of the Bastille!"

"Do you care to retain the title?"

"Certainly."

"Then do as I tell you."

"T is hard, however, to close one's eyes and ears."

"My dear Delaunay, go and pay a visit to Dumesnil's chimney and Pompadour's ceiling."

"Is it possible? You tell me of things I was not at all aware of."

"A proof that I know better than you what goes on in the Bastille; and if I were to speak of some things you do know, you would be still more surprised."

"What could you tell me?"

"That a week ago one of the officers of the Bastille, and an important one too, received fifty thousand francs to let two women pass with —"

"Monsieur, they were —"

"I know who they were, what they went for, and what they did. They were Mademoiselle de Valois and Mademoiselle de Charolais; they went to see the Duc de Richelieu, and they ate bon-bons till midnight in the Tour du Coin, where they intend to pay another visit to-morrow, as they have already announced to M. de Richelieu."

Delaunay turned pale.

"Well," continued Dubois, "do you think if I told these kind of things to the regent, who is, as you know, greedy of scandal, that a certain M. Delaunay would be long governor

of the Bastille ? But I shall not say a word, for we must help each other."

"I am at your orders, monsieur."

"Then I shall find everything ready ?"

"I promise you ; but not a word to monseigneur."

"That is right, M. Delaunay. Adieu !"

"Good," said Dubois, when he was gone ; "and now, monseigneur, when you want to marry your daughter to-morrow there shall be only one thing missing, — your son-in-law."

As Gaston passed on the letter to Dumesnil he heard steps in the corridor, and, hastily signing to the chevalier not to speak, he put out the light and began to undress. The governor entered. As it was not his custom to visit his prisoners at this hour, Gaston saw him with alarm, and he noticed that, as M. Delaunay placed his lamp on the table, his hand trembled. The turnkeys withdrew, but the prisoner saw two soldiers at the door.

"Chevalier," said the governor, "you told me to treat you as a man, — learn that you were condemned yesterday."

"And you have come to tell me," said Gaston, who always gained courage in the face of danger, "that the hour of my execution is arrived."

"No, monsieur, but it approaches."

"When will it be ?"

"May I tell you the truth, chevalier ?"

"I shall be most grateful to you."

"To-morrow, at break of day."

"Where ?"

"In the yard of the Bastille."

"Thank you ; I had hoped, however, that before I died I might have been the husband of the young girl who was here yesterday."

"Did M. d'Argenson promise you this ?"

"No, but he promised to ask the king."

"The king may have refused."

"Does he never grant such favours ?"

Gaston touched the water, or rather ice, of the fosse ; a moment after, La Jonquière was by his side.

"Now follow me," said the latter. On the other side of the moat a ladder awaited them.

"You have accomplices then ?"

"Parbleu ! do you think the lark pâté came by itself ?"

"Who says one cannot escape from the Bastille ?" said Gaston joyously.

"My young friend," said Dubois, stopping on the third step, "take my advice: don't get in there again without me ; you might not be as fortunate the second time as the first."

They continued to mount the wall, on the platform of which a sentinel walked, but, instead of opposing them, he held his hand to La Jonquière to assist him, and in three minutes they were on the platform, had drawn up the ladder, and placed it on the other side of the wall.

The descent was as safely managed, and they found themselves on another frozen moat.

"Now," said the captain, "we must take away the ladder, that we may not compromise the poor devil who helped us."

"We are then free ?"

"Nearly so," said La Jonquière.

Gaston, strengthened by this news, took up the ladder on his shoulder.

"Peste, chevalier ! the late Hercules was nothing to you, I think."

"Bah !" said Gaston, "at this moment I could carry the Bastille itself."

They went on in silence to a lane in the Faubourg St. Antoine ; the streets were deserted.

"Now, my dear chevalier," said La Jonquière, "do me the favour to follow me to the corner of the Faubourg."

"I would follow you to —"

"Not so far, if you please ; for safety's sake we will each go our own way."

"What carriage is that?"

"Mine."

"How! yours?"

"Yes."

"Peste! my dear captain; four horses! you travel like a prince!"

"Three horses; one is for you."

"How! you consent?"

"Pardieu! that is not all."

"What?"

"You have no money?"

"It was taken away."

"Here are fifty louis."

"But, captain —"

"Come, it is Spanish money; take it."

Gaston took the purse, while a postilion unharnessed a horse and led it to him.

"Now," said Dubois, "where are you going?"

"To Bretagne, to rejoin my companions."

"You are mad, my dear fellow; they are all condemned and may be executed in two or three days."

"You are right," said Gaston.

"Go to Flanders," said La Jonquière, "it is a pleasant country; in fifteen or eighteen hours you can reach the frontier."

"Yes," said Gaston gloomily; "thank you, I know where I shall go."

"Well, good luck to you," said Dubois, getting into his carriage.

"The same to you," said Gaston.

They grasped each other's hands, and then each went his own way.

CHAPTER XXXII.

SHOWING THAT WE MUST NOT ALWAYS JUDGE OTHERS BY OURSELVES, ABOVE ALL IF WE ARE CALLED DUBOIS.

THE regent, as usual, passed the evening with Hélène. He had not missed for four or five days, and the hours he passed with her were his happy hours, but this time he found her very much shaken by her visit to her lover in the Bastille.

"Come," said the regent, "take courage, Hélène ; to-morrow you shall be his wife."

"To-morrow is distant," replied she.

"Hélène, believe in my word, which has never failed you. I tell you that to-morrow shall dawn happily for you and for him."

Hélène sighed deeply.

A servant entered and spoke to the regent.

"What is it ?" asked Hélène, who was alarmed at the slightest thing.

"Nothing, my child," said the duke ; "it is only my secretary, who wishes to see me on some pressing business."

"Shall I leave you ?"

"Yes, do' me that favour for an instant."

Hélène withdrew into her room.

At the same time the door opened and Dubois entered, out of breath.

"Where do you come from in such a state ?"

"Parbleu ! from the Bastille."

"And our prisoner ?"

"Well."

"Is everything arranged for the marriage ?"

"Yes, everything but the hour, which you did not name."

"Let us say eight in the morning."

"At eight in the morning," said Dubois, calculating.

"Yes, what are you calculating?"

"I am thinking where he will be."

"Who?"

"The prisoner."

"What! the prisoner!"

"Yes; at eight o'clock he will be forty leagues from Paris!"

"From Paris!"

"Yes; if he continues to go at the pace at which I saw him set out."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, monseigneur, that there will be one thing only wanting at the marriage, — the husband."

"Gaston?"

"Has escaped from the Bastille half an hour ago."

"You lie, abbé; people do not escape from the Bastille."

"I beg your pardon, monseigneur; people escape from any place when they are condemned to death."

"He escaped, knowing that to-morrow he was to wed her whom he loved?"

"Listen, monseigneur, life is a charming thing, and we all cling to it; then your son-in-law has a charming head which he wishes to keep on his shoulders, — what more natural?"

"And where is he?"

"Perhaps I may be able to tell you to-morrow evening; at present, all I know is that he is at some distance, and that I will answer for it he will not return."

The regent became deeply thoughtful.

"Really, monseigneur, your *naïveté* causes me perpetual astonishment; you must be strangely ignorant of the human heart if you suppose that a man condemned to death would remain in prison when he had a chance of escape."

"Oh, Monsieur de Chanlay!" cried the regent.

"Eh, mon Dieu! this chevalier has acted as the commonest workman would have done, and quite right too."

"Dubois! and my daughter?"

"Well, your daughter, monseigneur?"

"It will kill her," said the regent.

"Oh no, monseigneur, not at all. When she finds out what he is, she will be consoled, and you can marry her to some small German or Italian prince,—to the Duke of Modena, for instance, whom Mademoiselle de Valois will not have."

"Dubois! and I meant to pardon him."

"He has done it for himself, monseigneur, thinking it safer, and, *ma foi!* I should have done the same."

"Oh, you! you are not noble, you had not taken an oath."

"You mistake, monseigneur; I had taken an oath, to prevent your highness from committing a folly, and I have succeeded."

"Well, well, let us speak of it no more, not a word of this before Hélène,—I will undertake to tell her."

"And I to get back your son-in-law."

"No, no, he has escaped, let him profit by it."

As the regent spoke these words a noise was heard in the neighbouring room, and a servant entering, hurriedly announced,—

"Monsieur Gaston de Chanlay."

Dubois turned pale as death, and his face assumed an expression of threatening anger. The regent rose in a transport of joy, which brought a bright colour into his face: there was as much pleasure in this face, rendered sublime by confidence, as there was compressed fury in Dubois's sharp and malignant countenance.

"Let him enter," said the regent.

"At least, give me time to go," said Dubois.

"Ah! yes, he would recognise you."

Dubois retired with a growling noise, like a hyena disturbed in its feast, or in its lair; he entered the next room.

There he sat down by a table on which was every material for writing, and this seemed to suggest some new and terrible idea, for his face suddenly lighted up.

He rang.

"Send for the portfolio which is in my carriage," said he to the servant who appeared.

This order being executed at once, Dubois seized some papers, wrote on them some words with an expression of sinister joy, then, having ordered his carriage, drove to the Palais Royal.

Meanwhile the chevalier was led to the regent, and walked straight up to him.

"How! you here, monsieur!" said the duke, trying to look surprised.

"Yes, monseigneur, a miracle has been worked in my favour by La Jonquière; he had prepared all for flight, he asked for me under pretence of consulting me as to confessions; then, when we were alone, he told me all, and we escaped together and in safety."

"And instead of flying, monsieur, gaining the frontier, and placing yourself in safety, you are here at the peril of your life."

"Monseigneur," said Gaston, blushing, "I must confess that for a moment liberty seemed to me the most precious and the sweetest thing the world could afford. The first breath of air I drew seemed to intoxicate me, but I soon reflected."

"On one thing, monsieur?"

"On two, monseigneur."

"You thought of Hélène, whom you were abandoning."

"And of my companions, whom I left under the axe."

"And then you decided?"

"That I was bound to their cause till our projects were accomplished."

"Our projects!"

"Yes, are they not yours as well as mine?"

"Listen, monsieur," said the regent; "I believe that man

must keep within the limits of his strength. There are things which God seems to forbid him to execute; there are warnings which tell him to renounce certain projects. I believe that it is sacrilege to despise these warnings, to remain deaf to this voice; our projects have miscarried, monsieur, let us think no more of them."

"On the contrary, monseigneur," said Gaston, sadly shaking his head, "let us think of them more than ever."

"But you are furious, monsieur," said the regent, "to persist in an undertaking which has now become so difficult that it is almost madness."

"I think, monseigneur, of our friends arrested, tried, condemned; M. d'Argenson told me so; of our friends who are destined to the scaffold, and who can be saved only by the death of the regent; of our friends who would say, if I were to leave France, that I purchased my safety by their ruin, and that the gates of the Bastille were opened by my revelations."

"Then, monsieur, to this point of honour you sacrifice everything, even Hélène?"

"Monseigneur, if they be still alive, I must save them."

"But if they be dead?"

"Then it is another thing," replied Gaston; "then I must revenge them."

"Really, monsieur," said the duke, "this seems to me a somewhat exaggerated idea of heroism. It seems to me that you have, in your own person, already paid your share. Believe me, take the word of a man who is a good judge in affairs of honour; you are absolved in the eyes of the whole world, my dear Brutus."

"I am not in my own, monseigneur."

"Then you persist?"

"More than ever; the regent must die, and," added he in a hollow voice, "die he shall."

"But do you not first wish to see Mademoiselle de Chaverny?" asked the regent.

"Yes, monseigneur, but first I must have your promise

to aid me in my project. Remember, monseigneur; there is not an instant to lose; my companions are condemned, as I was. Tell me at once, before I see H  l  ne, that you will not abandon me. Let me make a new engagement with you. I am a man; I love, and therefore I am weak. I shall have to struggle against her tears and against my own weakness; monseigneur, I will only see H  l  ne under the condition that you will enable me to see the regent."

"And if I refuse that condition?"

"Then monseigneur, I will not see H  l  ne; I am dead to her; it is useless to renew hope in her which she must lose again, it is enough that she must weep for me once."

"And you would still persist?"

"Yes, but with less chance."

"Then what would you do?"

"Wait for the regent wherever he goes, and strike him whenever I can find him."

"Think once more," said the duke.

"By the honour of my name," replied Gaston, "I once more implore your aid, or I declare that I will find means to dispense with it."

"Well, monsieur, go and see H  l  ne, and you shall have my answer on your return."

"Where?"

"In that room."

"And the answer shall be according to my desire?"

"Yes."

Gaston went into H  l  ne's room; she was kneeling before a crucifix, praying that her lover might be restored to her. At the noise which Gaston made in opening the door, she turned round.

Believing that God had worked a miracle, and uttering a cry, she held out her arms towards the chevalier, but without the strength to raise herself.

"Oh mon Dieu! is it himself? is it his shade?"

"It is myself, H  l  ne," said the young man, darting towards her, and grasping her hands.

"But how? a prisoner this morning, — free this evening?"

"I escaped, Hélène."

"And then you thought of me, you ran to me, you would not fly without me. Oh! I recognise my Gaston there. Well — I am ready, take me where you will — I am yours — I am —"

"Hélène," said Gaston, "you are not the bride of an ordinary man; if I had been only like all other men, you would not have loved me."

"Oh, no!"

"Well, Hélène, to superior souls superior duties are allotted, and consequently greater trials; before I can be yours I have to accomplish the mission on which I came to Paris; we have both a fatal destiny to fulfil. Our life or death hangs on a single event, which must be accomplished to-night."

"What do you mean?" cried the young girl.

"Listen, Hélène," replied Gaston, "if in four hours, that is to say, by daybreak, you have no news of me, do not expect me, believe that all that has passed between us is but a dream; and, if you can obtain permission to do so, come again and see me in the Bastille."

Hélène trembled, Gaston took her back to her *prie-dieu*, where she knelt.

Then, kissing her on the forehead as a brother might have done, — "Pray on, Hélène," said he, "for in praying for me you pray also for Bretagne and for France." Then he rushed out of the room.

"Alas! alas!" murmured Hélène, "save *him*, my God! and what care I for the rest of the world!"

Gaston was met by a servant who gave him a note, telling him the duke was gone.

The note was as follows: —

"There is a *bal masqué* to-night at Monceaux; the regent will be there. He generally retires towards one o'clock in the morning into a favourite conservatory, which is situ-

ated at the end of the gilded gallery. No one enters there ordinarily but himself, because this habit of his is known and respected. The regent will be dressed in a black velvet domino, on the left arm of which is embroidered a golden bee. He hides this sign in a fold when he wishes to remain incognito. The card I enclose is an ambassador's ticket. With this you will be admitted, not only to the ball, but to this conservatory, where you will appear to seek a private interview. Use it for your encounter with the regent. My carriage is below, in which you will find my own domino. The coachman is at your orders."

On reading this note, which, as it were, brought him face to face with the man he meant to assassinate, a cold perspiration passed over Gaston's forehead, and he was obliged for a moment to lean against a chair for support, but suddenly, as if taking a violent resolution, he darted down the staircase, jumped into the carriage, and cried, —

"To Monceaux!"

Scarcely had he quitted the room, when a secret door in the woodwork opened, and the duke entered. He went to Hélène's door, who uttered a cry of delight at seeing him.

"Well," said the regent, sadly, "are you content, Hélène?"

"Oh! it is you, monseigneur?"

"You see, my child, that my predictions are fulfilled. Believe me when I say, 'Hope.'"

"Ah! monseigneur, are you then an angel come down to earth to stand to me in the place of the father whom I have lost?"

"Alas!" said the regent, smiling, "I am not an angel, my dear Hélène; but such as I am, I will indeed be to you a father, and a tender one."

Saying this the regent took Hélène's hand, and was about to kiss it respectfully, but she raised her head and presented her forehead to him.

"I see that you love him truly," said he.

"Monseigneur, I bless you."

"May your blessing bring me happiness," said the regent; then, going down to his carriage, —

"To the Palais Royal," said he, "but remember you have only a quarter of an hour to drive to Monceaux."

The horses flew along the road.

As the carriage entered under the peristyle, a courier on horseback was setting out.

Dubois, having seen him start, closed the window and went back to his apartments.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

MONCEAUX.

MEANWHILE Gaston went towards Monceaux.

He had found the duke's domino and mask in the carriage. The mask was of black velvet, the domino of violet satin. He put them both on, and suddenly remembered that he was without arms.

He thought, however, he should easily procure some weapon at Monceaux. As he approached, he found it was not a weapon that he needed, but courage. There passed in his mind a terrible contest. Pride and humanity struggled against each other, and, from time to time, he represented to himself his friends in prison, condemned to a cruel and infamous death.

As the carriage entered the courtyard of Monceaux, he murmured, "Already!"

However, the carriage stopped, the door was opened, he must alight. The prince's private carriage and coachman had been recognised, and all the servants overwhelmed him with attentions.

Gaston did not remark it — a kind of mist passed before his eyes — he presented his card.

It was the custom then for both men and women to be masked: but it was more frequently the women than the men who went to these reunions unmasked. At this period women spoke not only freely, but well, and the mask hid neither folly nor inferiority of rank, for the women of that day were all witty, and if they were handsome they were soon titled: witness the Duchesse de Châteauroux and the Comtesse Dubarry.

Gaston knew no one, but he felt instinctively that he was amongst the most select society of the day. Among the men were Novilles, Brancas, Broglie, St. Simon, and Biron. The women might be more mixed, but certainly not less *spirituelles* nor less elegant.

No one knew how to organize a fête like the regent. The luxury of good taste, the profusion of flowers, the lights, the princes and ambassadors, the charming and beautiful women who surrounded him, all had their effect on Gaston, who now recognised in the regent, not only a king, but a king at once powerful, gay, amiable, beloved, and, above all, popular and national.

Gaston's heart beat when, seeking amongst these heads the one for which his blows were destined, he saw a black domino.

Without the mask, which hid his face and concealed from all eyes its changing expression, he would not have taken four steps through the rooms without some one pointing him out as an assassin.

Gaston could not conceal from himself that there was something cowardly in coming to a prince, his host, to change those brilliant lights into funeral torches, to stain those dazzling tapestries with blood, to arouse the cry of terror amid the joyous tumult of a fête,—and at this thought his courage failed him, and he stepped towards the door.

“I will kill him outside,” said he, “but not here.”

Then he remembered the duke's directions; his card would open to him the isolated conservatory, and he murmured, —

“He foresaw that I should be a coward.”

He approached a sort of gallery containing buffets, where the guests came for refreshment. He went also, not that he was hungry or thirsty, but because he was unarmed. He chose a long, sharp, and pointed knife, and put it under his domino, where he was sure no one could see it.

“The likeness to Ravillac will be complete,” said he.

At this moment, as Gaston turned, he heard a well-known voice say, —

“You hesitate?”

Gaston opened his domino, and showed the duke the knife which it concealed.

“I see the knife glisten, but I also see the hand tremble.”

“Yes, monseigneur, it is true,” said Gaston; “I hesitated, I trembled, I felt inclined to fly; but thank God you are here.”

“And your ferocious courage?” said the duke, in a mocking voice.

“It is not that I have lost it.”

“What has become of it, then?”

“Monseigneur, I am under his roof.”

“Yes; but in the conservatory you are not.”

“Could you not show him to me first, that I might accustom myself to his presence, that I may be inspired by the hatred I bear him, for I do not know how to find him in this crowd?”

“Just now he was near you.”

Gaston shuddered.

“Near me?” said he.

“As near as I am,” replied the duke, gravely.

“I will go to the conservatory, monseigneur.”

“Go, then.”

“Yet a moment, monseigneur, that I may recover myself.”

“Very well, you know the conservatory is beyond that gallery; stay, the doors are closed.”

“Did you not say that with this card the servants would open them to me?”

“Yes, but it would be better to open them yourself, — a servant might wait for your exit. If you are thus agitated before you strike the blow, what will it be afterwards? Then the regent probably will not fall without defending himself, — without a cry; they will all run to him, you will be arrested, and adieu your hope of the future. Think of *Hélène*, who waits for you.”

It is impossible to describe what was passing in Gaston's heart during this speech.

The duke, however, watched its effect upon his countenance.

"Well," said Gaston, "what shall I do? advise me."

"When you are at the door of the conservatory, the one which opens on to the gallery turning to the left,—do you know?"

"Yes."

"Under the lock you will find a carved button: push it, and the door will open, unless it be fastened within. But the regent, who has no suspicion, will not take this precaution. I have been there twenty times for a private audience. If he be not there, wait for him. You will know him, if there, by the black domino and the golden bee."

"Yes, yes; I know," said Gaston; not knowing, however, what he said.

"I do not reckon much on you this evening," replied the duke.

"Ah! monseigneur, the moment approaches which will change my past life into a doubtful future, perhaps of shame, at least of remorse."

"Remorse!" replied the duke. "When we perform an action which we believe to be just, and commanded by conscience, we do not feel remorse. Do you doubt the sanctity of your cause?"

"No, monseigneur, but it is easy for you to speak thus. You have the idea,—I, the execution. You are the head, but I am the arm. Believe me, monseigneur," continued he, in a hollow voice, and choking with emotion, "it is a terrible thing to kill a man who is before you defenceless,—smiling on his murderer. I thought myself courageous and strong; but it must be thus with every conspirator who undertakes what I have done. In a moment of excitement, of pride, of enthusiasm, or of hatred, we take a fatal vow; then there is a vast extent of time between us and our

victim ; but the oath taken, the fever is calmed, the enthusiasm cools, the hatred diminishes. Every day brings us nearer the end to which we are tending, and then we shudder when we feel what a crime we have undertaken. And yet inexorable time flows on ; and at every hour which strikes, we see our victim take another step, until at length the interval between us disappears, and we stand face to face. Believe me, monseigneur, the bravest tremble ; for murder is always murder. Then we see that we are not the ministers of our consciences, but the slaves of our oaths. We set out with head erect, saying, 'I am the chosen one' ; we arrive with head bowed down, saying, 'I am accursed.'"

"There is yet time, monsieur."

"No, no ; you well know, monseigneur, that fate urges me onward. I shall accomplish my task, terrible though it be. My heart will shudder, but my hand will still be firm. Yes, I tell you, were it not for my friends, whose lives hang on the blow I am about to strike, were there no Hélène, whom I should cover with mourning, if not with blood, oh, I would prefer the scaffold, even the scaffold, with all its shame, for that does not punish, it absolves."

"Come," said the duke, "I see that, though you tremble, you will act."

"Do not doubt it, monseigneur ; pray for me, for in half an hour all will be over."

The duke gave an involuntary start ; however, approving Gaston's determination, he once more mixed with the crowd.

Gaston found an open window with a balcony. He stepped out for a moment to cool the fever in his veins, but it was in vain ; the flame which consumed him was not to be extinguished thus.

He heard one o'clock strike.

"Now," he murmured, "the time is come, and I cannot draw back. My God, to thee I recommend my soul ! — Hélène, adieu !"

Then slowly but firmly he went to the door, and, pressing the button, it opened noiselessly before him.

A mist came before his eyes. He seemed in a new world. The music sounded like a distant and charming melody. Around him breathed the sweetly perfumed flowers, and alabaster lamps half hidden in luxuriant foliage shed a delicious twilight over the scene, whilst through the interlacing leaves of tropical plants could just be seen the leafless gloomy trees beyond, and the snow covering the earth as with a winding sheet. Even the temperature was changed, and a sudden shiver passed through his veins. The contrast of all this verdure, these magnificent and blossoming orange trees, — these magnolias, splendid with the waxy blooms, with the gilded saloons he had left, bewildered him. It seemed difficult to connect the thought of murder with this fair-smiling and enchanted scene. The soft gravel yielded to his tread, and plashing fountains murmured forth a plaintive and monotonous harmony.

Gaston was almost afraid to look for a human form. At length he glanced round.

Nothing! He went on.

At length, beneath a broad-leaved palm, surrounded by blooming rhododendrons, he saw the black phantom seated on a bank of moss, his back turned towards the side from which he was approaching.

The blood rushed to Gaston's cheeks, his hand trembled, and he vainly sought for some support.

The domino did not move.

Gaston involuntarily drew back. All at once he forced his rebellious limbs to move on, and his trembling fingers to grasp the knife they had almost abandoned, and he stepped towards the regent, stifling a sob which was about to escape him.

At this moment the figure moved, and Gaston saw the golden bee, which seemed like a burning gem before his eyes.

The domino turned towards Gaston, and as he did so,



the young man's arm grew rigid, the foam rose to his lips, his teeth chattered, for a vague suspicion entered his breast.

Suddenly he uttered a piercing cry. The domine had risen and was unmasked, — his face was that of the Duc d'Olivares.

Gaston, thunderstruck, remained livid and mute. The regent and the duke were one and the same. The regent retained his calm majestic attitude; looked at the hand which held the knife, and the knife fell. Then, looking at his intended murderer with a smile at once sweet and sad, Gaston fell down before him like a tree cut by the axe.

Not a word had been spoken; nothing was heard but Gaston's broken sobs, and the water of the fountains plashing monotonously as it fell.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE PARDON.

"Rise, monsieur," said the regent.

"No, monseigneur," cried Gaston, bowing his forehead to the ground, "oh, no, it is at your feet that I should die."

"Die! Gaston, you see that you are pardoned."

"Oh, monseigneur, punish me, in Heaven's name; for you must indeed despise me if you pardon me."

"But have you not guessed?" asked the regent.

"What?"

"The reason why I pardon you."

Gaston cast a retrospective glance upon the past, his sad and solitary youth, his brother's despairing death, his love for Hélène, those days that seemed so long away from her, those nights that passed so quickly beneath the convent window, his journey to Paris, the duke's kindness to the young girl, and, last, this unexpected clemency; but in all this he beheld nothing, he divined nothing.

"Thank Hélène," said the duke, who saw that Gaston vainly sought the cause of what had happened; "thank Hélène, for it is she who saves your life."

"Hélène! monseigneur."

"I cannot punish my daughter's affianced husband."

"Hélène your daughter! oh, monseigneur, and I would have killed you!"

"Yes, remember what you said just now. We set out the chosen one, we return the murderer. And sometimes you see more than a murderer, — a parricide, — for I am almost your father," said the duke, holding out his hand to Gaston.

"Monseigneur, have mercy on me."

"You have a noble heart, Gaston."

"And you, monseigneur, are a noble prince. Henceforth I am yours, body and soul. Every drop of my blood for one tear of Hélène's, for one wish of your highness's."

"Thanks, Gaston," said the duke, smiling, "I will repay your devotion by your happiness."

"I happy through your highness! Ah! monseigneur, God revenges himself in permitting you to return me so much good for the evil I intended you."

The regent smiled at this effusion of simple joy, when the door opened and gave entrance to a green domino.

"Captain La Jonquière!" cried Gaston.

"Dubois!" murmured the duke, frowning.

"Monseigneur," said Gaston, hiding his face in his hand, pale with affright; "monseigneur, I am lost. It is no longer I who must be saved. I forgot my honour, I forgot my friends."

"Your friends, monsieur?" said the duke coldly. "I thought you no longer made common cause with such men."

"Monseigneur, you said I had a noble heart; believe me when I say that Pontcalec, Montlouis, Du Couëdic, and Talhouet have hearts as noble as my own."

"Noble!" repeated the duke, contemptuously.

"Yes, monseigneur, I repeat what I said."

"And do you know what they would have done, my poor child? you, who were their blind tool, the arm that they placed at the end of their thoughts. These noble hearts would have delivered their country to the stranger, they would have erased the name of France from the list of sovereign nations. Nobles, they were bound to set an example of courage and loyalty,—they have given that of perfidy and cowardice; well, you do not reply,—you lower your eyes; if it be your poniard you seek, it is at your feet; take it up, there is yet time."

"Monsieur," said Gaston, clasping his hands, "I renounce

my ideas of assassination, I detest them, and I ask your pardon for having entertained them; but if you will not save my friends, I beg of you at least to let me perish with them. If I live when they die, my honour dies with them; think of it, monseigneur, the honour of the name your daughter is to bear."

The regent bent his head as he replied, —

"It is impossible, monsieur; they have betrayed France; and they must die."

"Then I die with them," said Gaston, "for I also have betrayed France, and, moreover, would have murdered your highness."

The regent looked at Dubois; the glance they exchanged did not escape Gaston. He understood that he had dealt with a false La Jonquière as well as a false Duc d'Olivares.

"No," said Dubois, addressing Gaston, "you shall not die for that, monsieur; but you must understand that there are crimes which the regent has neither the power nor the right to pardon."

"But he pardoned me!" exclaimed Gaston.

"You are Hélène's husband," said the duke.

"You mistake, monseigneur; I am not, and I never shall be; and as such a sacrifice involves the death of him who makes it, I shall die, monseigneur."

"Bah!" said Dubois, "no one dies of love nowadays; it was very well in the time of M. d'Urfé and Mademoiselle de Scuderi."

"Perhaps you are right, monsieur; but in all times men die by the dagger;" and Gaston stooped and picked up the knife with an expression which was not to be mistaken. Dubois did not move.

The regent made a step.

"Throw down that weapon, monsieur," said he, with hauteur.

Gaston placed the point against his breast.

"Throw it down, I say," repeated the regent.

"The life of my friends, monseigneur," said Gaston.

The regent turned again to Dubois, who smiled a sardonic smile.

"T is well," said the regent, "they shall live."

"Ah ! monsieur," said Gaston, seizing the duke's hand, and trying to raise it to his lips, "you are the image of God on earth."

"Monseigneur, you commit an irreparable fault," said Dubois.

"What !" cried Gaston astonished, "you are then —"

"The Abbé Dubois, at your service," said the false La Jonquière, bowing.

"Oh ! monseigneur, listen only to your own heart,— I implore."

"Monseigneur, sign nothing," said Dubois.

"Sign ! monseigneur, sign !" repeated Gaston, "you promised they should live, and I know your promise is sacred."

"Dubois, I shall sign," said the duke.

"Has your highness decided ?"

"I have given my word."

"Very well ; as you please."

"At once, monseigneur, at once ; I know not why, but I am alarmed in spite of myself ; monseigneur, their pardon, I implore you."

"Eh ! monsieur," said Dubois, "since his highness has promised, what signify five minutes more or less ?"

The regent looked uneasily at Dubois.

"Yes, you are right," said he, "this very moment ; your portfolio, abbé, and quick, the young man is impatient."

Dubois bowed assent, called a servant, got his portfolio, and presented to the regent a sheet of paper, who wrote an order on it and signed it.

"Now a courier."

"Oh, no ! monseigneur, it is useless."

"Why so ?"

"A courier would never go quickly enough. I will go

"He was in an excess of enthusiasm, — he might have forgotten his love. You know my principle, monseigneur; distrust first impulses, they are always good."

"It is an infamous principle."

"Monseigneur, either one is a diplomatist or one is not."

"Well," said the regent, stepping towards the door, "I shall go and warn him."

"Monseigneur," said Dubois, stopping the duke with an accent of extreme resolution, and taking a paper out of his portfolio, already prepared, "if you do so, have the kindness in that case to accept my resignation at once. Joke, if you will, but, as Horace said, 'Est modus in rebus.' He was a great as well as a courteous man. Come, come, monseigneur, a truce to politics for this evening. Go back to the ball, and to-morrow evening all will be settled, — France will be rid of four of her worst enemies, and you will retain a son-in-law whom I greatly prefer to M. de Riom, I assure you."

And with these words they returned to the ball-room, Dubois joyous and triumphant, the duke sad and thoughtful, but convinced that his minister was right.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE LAST INTERVIEW.

GASTON left the conservatory, his heart bounding with joy. The enormous weight which had oppressed him since the commencement of the conspiracy, and which Hélène's love had scarcely been able to alleviate, now seemed to disappear as at the touch of an angel.

To dreams of vengeance, dreams both terrible and bloody, succeeded visions of love and glory. Hélène was not only a charming and a loving woman, she was also a princess of the blood royal, — one of those divinities whose tenderness men would purchase with their heart's blood, if they did not, being after all weak as mortals, give this inestimable tenderness away.

And Gaston felt revive within his breast the slumbering instinct of ambition. What a brilliant fortune was his, — one to be envied by such men as Richelieu and Lauzun. No Louis XIV., imposing, as on Lauzun, exile or the abandonment of his mistress, — no irritated father combating the pretensions of a simple gentleman, — but, on the contrary, a powerful friend, greedy of love, longing to prove his affection for his pure and noble daughter. A holy emulation between the daughter and the son-in-law to make themselves more worthy of so just a prince, so mild a conqueror.

In a quarter of an hour Gaston had gained the Rue du Bac.

The door opened before him — a cry was heard — Hélène, at the window watching for his return, had recognised the carriage, and ran joyously to meet him.

"Saved!" cried Gaston, seeing her; "saved! my friends, I — you — all — saved!"

"Oh, God!" cried Hélène, turning pale, "you have killed him, then?"

"No, no; thank God! Oh, Hélène! what a heart, what a man is this regent! Oh, love him well, Hélène; you will love him, will you not?"

"Explain yourself, Gaston."

"Come, and let us speak of ourselves; I have but a few moments to give you, Hélène; but the duke will tell you all."

"One thing before all," said Hélène, "what is your fate?"

"The brightest in the world, Hélène, — your husband, rich and honoured. Hélène, I am wild with joy."

"And you remain with me at last?"

"No; I leave you, Hélène."

"Oh, Heavens!"

"But to return."

"Another separation!"

"Three days at the most, — three days only. I go to bring blessings on your name, on mine, on that of our protector, our friend."

"Where are you going?"

"To Nantes!"

"To Nantes!"

"Yes. This order is the pardon of Pontcalec, Montlouis, and Talhouet and Du Couedic. They are condemned to death, and they will owe me their lives. Oh, do not keep me here, Hélène; think of what you suffered just now, when you were watching for me."

"And, consequently, what I am to suffer again."

"No, my Hélène; for this time there is no fear, no obstacle; this time you are sure of my return."

"Gaston, shall I never see you but at rare intervals, and for a few minutes? Ah! Gaston, I have so much need of happiness."

"You shall be happy, Hélène, be assured."

"My heart sinks."

"Ah! when you know all!"

"But tell me at once."

"Hélène, the only thing wanting to my happiness is the permission to fall at your feet and tell you all; but I have promised; nay more, I have sworn."

"Always some secret!"

"This, at least, is a joyful one."

"Oh, Gaston, Gaston, I tremble."

"Look at me, Hélène; can you fear when you see the joy that sparkles in my eyes?"

"Why do you not take me with you, Gaston?"

"Hélène!"

"I beg of you to let us go together."

"Impossible."

"Why?"

"Because, first, I must be at Nantes in twenty hours."

"I will follow you, even should I die with fatigue."

"Then, because you are no longer your own mistress; you have here a protector, to whom you owe respect and obedience."

"The duke?"

"Yes; the duke. Oh, when you know what he has done for me,—for us."

"Let us leave a letter for him, and he will forgive us."

"No, no; he will say we are ungrateful; and he would be right. No, Hélène; while I go to Bretagne, swift as a saving angel, you shall remain here and hasten the preparations for our marriage. And when I return, I shall at once demand my wife; at your feet I shall bless you for the happiness and the honour you bestow on me."

"You leave me, Gaston?" cried Hélène, in a voice of distress.

"Oh, not thus, Hélène, not thus; I cannot leave you so. Oh, no! be joyous, Hélène; smile on me; say to me, in giving me your hand, that hand so pure and faithful, 'Go, Gaston, go, for it is your duty.'"

"Yes, my friend," said H  l  ne, "perhaps I ought to speak thus, but I have not the strength. Gaston, forgive me."

"Oh, H  l  ne, when I am so joyful."

"Gaston, it is beyond my power; remember that you take with you the half of my life."

Gaston heard the clock strike three, and started.

"Adieu, H  l  ne," said he.

"Adieu," murmured she.

Once more he pressed her hand and raised it to his lips, then dashed down the staircase towards the door.

But he heard H  l  ne's sobs.

Rapidly he remounted the staircase and ran to her. She was standing at the door of the room he had just left. Gaston clasped her in his arms, and she hung weeping upon his neck.

"Oh, mon Dieu!" cried she, "you leave me again, Gaston; listen to what I say, we shall never meet more."

"My poor H  l  ne," cried the young man, "you are mad."

"Despair has made me so."

And her tears ran down her cheeks.

All at once she seemed to make a violent effort, and, pressing her lips on those of her lover, she clasped him tightly to her breast, then quickly repulsing him, —

"Now go, Gaston," said she, "now I can die."

Gaston replied by passionate caresses. The clock struck the half-hour.

"Another half-hour to make up."

"Adieu, adieu, Gaston; you are right, you should already be away."

"Adieu for a time."

"Adieu, Gaston."

And H  l  ne returned to the pavilion. Gaston procured a horse, saddled, mounted, and left Paris by the same gate by which he had entered some days previously.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

NANTES.

THE commission named by Dubois was to be permanent. Invested with unlimited powers, which in certain cases means that the decision is settled beforehand, they besieged the earth, supported by strong detachments of troops.

Since the arrest of the four gentlemen, Nantes, terrified at first, had risen in their favour. The whole of Bretagne awaited a revolt, but in the mean while was quiet.

However, the trial was approaching. On the eve of the public audience, Pontcalec held a serious conversation with his friends.

"Let us consider," said he, "whether in word or deed we have committed any imprudence."

"No," said the other three.

"Has any one of you imparted our projects to his wife, his brother, a friend? Have you, Montlouis?"

"No, on my honour."

"You, Talhouet?"

"No."

"You, Couëdic?"

"No."

"Then they have neither proof nor accusation against us. No one has surprised us, no one wishes us harm."

"But," said Montlouis, "meanwhile we shall be tried."

"On what grounds?"

"Oh, secret information," said Talhouet, smiling.

"Very secret," said Du Couëdic, "since they do not breathe a word."

"Ah, one fine night they will force us to escape, that they may not be obliged to liberate us some fine day."

"I do not believe it," said Montlouis, who had always been the most desponding, perhaps because he had the most at stake, having a young wife and two children who adored him. "I do not believe it. I have seen Dubois in England. I have talked with him; his face is like a ferret's, licking his lips when thirsty. Dubois is thirsty, and we are taken. Dubois's thirst will be slaked by our blood."

"But," said Du Couëdic, "there is the parliament of Bretagne."

"Yes, to look on, whilst we lose our heads."

There was only one of the four who smiled; that was Pontcalec.

"My friends," said he, "take courage. If Dubois be thirsty, so much the worse for Dubois. He will go mad, that is all; but this time I answer for it he shall not taste our blood."

And, indeed, from the beginning the task of the commission seemed difficult. No confessions, no proofs, no witnesses. Bretagne laughed in the commissioners' faces, and when she did not laugh, she threatened. The president despatched a courier to Paris to explain the state of things, and get further instructions.

"Judge by their projects," said Dubois; "they may have done little because they were prevented, but they intended much, and the intention in matters of rebellion is equivalent to the act."

Armed with this terrible weapon, the commission soon overthrew the hopes of the province. There was a terrible audience, in which the accused commenced with raillery and ended with accusation. On re-entering the prison, Pontcalec congratulated them on the truths they had told the judge.

"Nevertheless," said Montlouis, "it is a bad affair. Bretagne does not revolt."

"She waits our condemnation," said Talhouet.

"Then she will revolt somewhat late," said Montlouis.

"But our condemnation may not take place," said Pontcalec. "Say, frankly, we are guilty, but without proofs who will dare to sentence us? The commission?"

"No, not the commission, but Dubois."

"I have a great mind to do one thing," said Du Couëdic.

"What?"

"At the first audience to cry, 'Bretagne to the rescue!' Each time we have seen faces of friends; we should be delivered or killed, but at least it would be decided. I should prefer death to this suspense."

"But why run the risk of being wounded by some satellite of justice?"

"Because such a wound might be healed; not so the wound the executioner would make."

"Oh!" said Pontcalec, "you will have no more to do with the executioner than I shall."

"Always the prediction," said Montlouis. "You know that I have no faith in it."

"You are wrong."

"This is sure, my friends," said Pontcalec. "We shall be exiled, we shall be forced to embark, and I shall be lost on the way. This is my fate. But yours may be different. Ask to go by a different vessel from me; or there is another chance. I may fall from the deck, or slip on the steps; at least, I shall die by the water. You know that is certain. I might be condemned to death, taken to the very scaffold, but if the scaffold were on dry ground I should be as easy as I am now."

His tone of confidence gave them courage. They even laughed at the rapidity with which the deliberations were carried on. They did not know that Dubois sent courier after courier from Paris to hasten them.

At length the commission declared themselves sufficiently enlightened, and retired to deliberate in secret session.

Never was there a more stormy discussion. History has

penetrated the secrets of these deliberations, in which some of the least bold or least ambitious counsellors revolted against the idea of condemning these gentlemen on presumptions which were supported solely by the intelligence transmitted to them by Dubois; but the majority were devoted to Dubois, and the committee came to abuse and quarrels, and almost to blows.

At the end of a sitting of eleven hours' duration, the majority declared their decision.

The commissioners associated sixteen others of the contumacious gentlemen with the four chiefs, and declared, —

“That the accused, found guilty of criminal projects, of treason, and of felonious intentions, should be beheaded: those present, in person, those absent, in effigy. That the walls and fortifications of their castles should be demolished, their patents of nobility annulled, and their forests cut down to the height of nine feet.”

An hour after the delivery of this sentence, an order was given to the usher to announce it to the prisoners.

The sentence had been given after the stormy sitting of which we have spoken, and in which the accused had experienced such lively marks of sympathy from the public. And so, having beaten the judges on all the counts of the indictment, never had they been so full of hope.

They were seated at supper in their common room, calling to mind all the details of the sitting, when suddenly the door opened, and in the shade appeared the pale and stern form of the usher.

The solemn apparition changed their pleasant conversation on the instant, into anxious palpitations.

The usher advanced slowly, whilst the jailer remained at the door, and the barrels of muskets were seen shining in the gloom of the corridor.

“What is your will, sir?” asked Pontcalec, “and what signifies this deadly paraphernalia?”

“Gentlemen,” said the usher, “I bear the sentence of the tribunal. On your knees and listen.”

"How?" said Montlouis, "it is only sentences of death that must be heard kneeling."

"On your knees, gentlemen," replied the usher.

"Let the guilty and the base kneel," said Du Couëdic; "we are gentlemen, and innocent. We will hear our sentences standing."

"As you will, gentlemen; but uncover yourselves, for I speak in the king's name."

Talhouet, who alone had his hat on, removed it. The four gentlemen stood erect and bare-headed, leaning on each other, with pale faces and a smile upon their lips.

The usher read the sentence through, uninterrupted by a murmur, or by a single gesture of surprise.

When he had finished, --

"Why was I told," asked Pontcalec, "to declare the designs of Spain against France, and that I should be liberated? Spain was an enemy's country. I declared what I believed I knew of her projects; and, lo! I am condemned. Why is this? Is the commission, then, composed of cowards who spread snares for the accused?"

The usher made no answer.

"But," added Montlouis, "the regent spared all Paris, implicated in the conspiracy of Cellamare; not a drop of blood was shed. Yet those who wished to carry off the regent, perhaps to kill him, were at least as guilty as men against whom no serious accusations even could be made. Are we then chosen to pay for the indulgence shown to the capital?"

The usher made no reply.

"You forget one thing, Montlouis," said Du Couëdic, "the old family hatred against Bretagne; and the regent, to make people believe that he belongs to the family, wishes to prove that he hates us. It is not we personally who are struck at; it is a province, which for three hundred years has claimed in vain its privileges and its rights, and which they wish to find guilty in order to have done with it for ever."

The usher preserved a religious silence.

"Enough," said Talhouet, "we are condemned. 'Tis well. Now, have we, or have we not, the right of appeal?"

"No, gentlemen," said the usher.

"Then you can retire," said Couëdic.

The usher bowed and withdrew, followed by his escort, and the prison door, heavy and clanging, closed once more upon the four gentlemen.

"Well!" said Montlouis, when they were again alone.

"Well, we are condemned," said Pontcalec. "I never said there would be no sentence; I only said it would not be carried into execution."

"I am of Pontcalec's opinion," said Talhouet. "What they have done is but to terrify the province and test its patience."

"Besides," said Du Couëdic, "they will not execute us without the regent's ratification of the sentence. Now, without an extraordinary courier, it will take two days to reach Paris, one to examine into the affair, and two to return, all together five days. We have, then, five days before us; and what may not happen in five days? The province will rise on hearing of our doom —"

Montlouis shook his head.

"Besides, there is Gaston," said Pontcalec, "whom you always forget."

"I am much afraid that Gaston has been arrested," said Montlouis. "I know Gaston, and were he at liberty, we should have heard of him ere now."

"Prophet of evil," said Talhouet, "at least you will not deny that we have some days before us."

"Who knows?" said Montlouis.

"And the waters?" said Pontcalec; "the waters? You always forget that I can only perish by the waters."

"Well, then, let us be seated again," said Du Couëdic, "and a last glass to our healths."

"There is no more wine," said Montlouis; "it is an evil omen"

"Bah! there is more in the cellar," said Pontcalec.

And he called the jailer.

The man, on entering, found the four friends at table; he looked at them in astonishment.

"Well, what is there new, Master Christopher?" said Pontcalec.

Christopher came from Guer, and had a particular respect for Pontcalec, whose uncle Crysogon had been his seigneur.

"Nothing but what you know," he replied.

"Then go and fetch some wine."

"They wish to deaden their feelings," said the jailer to himself; "poor gentlemen."

Montlouis alone heard Christopher's remark, and he smiled sadly.

An instant afterwards they heard steps rapidly approaching their room. The door opened, and Christopher reappeared without any bottle in his hand.

"Well," said Pontcalec, "where is the wine?"

"Good news," cried Christopher, without answering Pontcalec's inquiry, "good news, gentlemen."

"What?" said Montlouis, starting. "Is the regent — dead?"

"And Bretagne in revolt?" asked Du Couëdic.

"No. I could not call that good news."

"Well, what is it then?" said Pontcalec.

"Monsieur de Châteauneuf has just ordered back to their barracks the hundred and fifty men who were under arms in the market-place, which had terrified everybody."

"Ah," said Montlouis, "I begin to believe it will not take place this evening."

At this moment the clock struck six.

"Well," said Pontcalec, "good news is no reason for our remaining thirsty; go and fetch our wine."

Christopher went out, and returned in ten minutes with a bottle.

The friends, who were still at table, filled their glasses.

"To Gaston's health," said Pontcalec, exchanging a

meaning glance with his friends, to whom alone this toast was comprehensible.

And they emptied their glasses, all except Montlouis, who stopped as he was lifting his to his lips.

"Well, what is it?" said Pontcalec.

"The drum," said Montlouis, stretching out his hand in the direction where he heard the sound.

"Well," said Talhouet, "did you not hear what Christopher said? it is the troops returning."

"On the contrary, it is the troupes going out; that is not a retreat, but the *générale*."

"The *générale*!" said Talhouet, "what on earth can that mean?"

"No good," said Montlouis, shaking his head.

"Christopher!" said Pontcalec, turning to the jailer.

"Yes, gentlemen, I will find out what it is," said he, "and be back in an instant."

He rushed out of the room, but not without carefully shutting the door behind him.

The four friends remained in anxious silence. After a lapse of ten minutes the door opened, and the jailer reappeared, pale with terror.

"A courier has just entered the castle court," said he; "he comes from Paris, he has delivered his despatches, and immediately the guards were doubled, and the drums beat in all the barracks."

"Oh, oh!" said Montlouis, "that concerns us."

"Some one is ascending the stairs," said the jailer, more pale and trembling than those to whom he spoke. In fact, they heard the butt ends of the muskets clanging on the stones of the corridor, and at the same time several voices were heard speaking hastily.

The door opened, and the usher reappeared.

"Gentlemen," said he, "how long do you desire to set your worldly affairs in order, and to undergo your sentence?"

A profound terror froze even the hearers.

"I desire," said Montlouis, "time for the sentence to reach Paris and return, approved by the regent."

"I," said Talhouet, "only desire the time necessary for the commission to repent of its iniquity."

"As for me," said Du Couëdic, "I wish for time for the minister at Paris to commute the sentence into eight days' imprisonment, which we deserve for having acted somewhat thoughtlessly."

"And you," said the usher gravely, to Pontcalec, who was silent, "what do you ask?"

"I," said Pontcalec calmly, "I demand nothing."

"Then, gentlemen," said the usher, "this is the answer of the commission: you have two hours at your disposal to arrange your spiritual and temporal affairs; it is now half-past six, in two hours and a half you must be on the Place du Bouffay, where the execution will take place."

There was a profound silence; the bravest felt fear seizing the very roots of their hair.

The usher retired without any one having made any answer; only the condemned looked at each other, and pressed each other's hands.

They had two hours.

Two hours, in the ordinary course of life, seem sometimes an age, at others two hours are but a moment.

The priests arrived, after them the soldiers, then the executioners.

The situation was appalling. Pontcalec, alone, did not belie himself. Not that the others wanted courage, but they wanted hope; still Pontcalec reassured them by the calmness with which he addressed, not only the priests, but the executioners themselves.

They made the preparations for that terrible process called the toilet of the condemned. The four sufferers must proceed to the scaffold dressed in black cloaks, in order that in the eyes of the people, from whom they always feared some tumult, they might be confounded with the priests who exhorted them.

Then the question of tying their hands was discussed, — an important question.

Pontcalec answered with his smile of sublime confidence, —

"Oh, leave us at least our hands free; we will go without disturbance."

"That has nothing to do with us," replied the executioner who was attending to Pontcalec; "unless by special order, the rules are the same for all sufferers."

"And who gives these orders?" said Pontcalec, laughing, "the king?"

"No, marquis," replied the executioner, astonished by such unexampled presence of mind, "not the king, but our chief."

"And where is your chief?"

"That is he, talking with the jailer Christopher."

"Call him then," said Pontcalec.

"Ho, Monsieur Waters!" cried the executioner, "please to come this way; there is one of these gentlemen asking for you."

A thunderbolt falling in the midst of them would not have produced a more terrible effect upon the four gentlemen than did this name.

"What did you say?" cried Pontcalec, shaking with affright; "what did you say? What name did you pronounce?"

"Waters, our chief."

Pontcalec, pale and overcome, sank upon a chair, casting an unutterable glance upon his affrighted companions. No one around them understood this sudden despair, which so rapidly succeeded to so high a confidence.

"Well?" said Montlouis, addressing Pontcalec in a tone of tender reproach.

"Yes, gentlemen, you were right," said Pontcalec; "but I also was right to believe in this prediction, for it will be accomplished, as the others were. Only this time I yield, and confess that we are lost."

And by a spontaneous movement the four gentlemen threw themselves into each other's arms, with prayers to Heaven.

"What do you order?" asked the executioner.

"It is useless to tie their hands if they will give their words of honour; they are soldiers and gentlemen."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE TRAGEDY OF NANTES.

MEANWHILE Gaston posted along the road to Nantes, leaving behind him all postilions, whose place, then as now, was to hold the horses instead of urging them on.

He had already passed Sevres and Versailles, and on arriving at Rambouillet just at daybreak, he saw the innkeeper and some postilions gathered round a horse which had just been bled. The horse was lying stretched on its side, in the middle of the street, breathing with difficulty.

Gaston at first paid no attention to all this; but as he was mounting himself, he heard one of the bystanders say, —

“If he goes on at that pace he will kill more than one between this and Nantes.”

Gaston was on the point of starting, but struck by a sudden and terrible idea, he stopped and signed to the innkeeper to come to him.

The innkeeper approached.

“Who has passed by here?” asked Gaston, “going at such a pace as to have put that poor animal in such a state?”

“A courier of the minister’s,” answered the innkeeper.

“A courier of the minister’s!” explained Gaston, “and coming from Paris?”

“From Paris.”

“How long has he passed, more or less?”

“About two hours.”

Gaston uttered a low cry which was like a groan. He knew Dubois, — Dubois, who had tricked him under the disguise of La Jonquière. The good will of the minister recurred to his mind and frightened him. Why this courier despatched post haste just two hours before himself?

"Oh! I was too happy," thought the young man, "and Hélène was right when she told me she had a presentiment of some great misfortune. Oh, I will overtake this courier, and learn the message that he bears, or perish in the attempt."

And he shot off like an arrow.

But with all these doubts and interrogations he had lost ten minutes more, so that on arriving at the first post station he was still two hours behind. This time the courier's horse had held out, and it was Gaston's which was ready to drop. The innkeeper tried to make some remarks, but Gaston dropped two or three louis and set off again at a gallop.

At the next posting-house he had gained a few minutes, and that was all. The courier who was before him had not slackened his pace. Gaston increased his own; but this frightful rapidity redoubled the young man's fever and mistrust.

"Oh!" said he, "I *will* arrive at the same time that he does, if I am unable to precede him." And he doubled his speed, and spurred on his horse, which, at every station, stopped dripping with blood and sweat, or tumbled down exhausted. At every station he learnt that the courier had passed almost as swiftly as himself, but he always gained some few minutes, and that sustained his strength.

Those whom he passed upon the way, leaving them far behind, pitied, in spite of themselves, the beautiful young man, pale-faced and haggard, who flew on thus, and took neither rest, nor food, dripping with sweat, despite the bitter cold, and whose parched lips could only frame the words: — "A horse! a horse! quick, there, a horse!"

And, in fact, exhausted, with no strength but that supplied him by his heart, and maddened more and more by the rapidity of his course and the feeling of danger, Gaston felt his head turn, his temples throb, and the perspiration of his limbs was tinged with blood.

Choked by the thirst and dryness of his throat, at Ancenis

he drank a glass of water: it was the first moment he had lost during sixteen hours, and yet the accursed courier was still an hour and a half in advance. In eighty leagues Gaston had only gained some forty or fifty minutes.

The night was drawing in rapidly, and Gaston, ever expecting to see some object appear on the horizon, tried to pierce the obscurity with his bloodshot glances; on he went, as in a dream, thinking he heard the ringing of bells, the roar of cannon, and the roll of drums. His brain was full of mournful strains and inauspicious sounds; he lived no longer as a man, but his fever kept him up, he flew as it were in the air.

On, and still on. About eight o'clock at night he perceived Nantes at length upon the horizon, like a dark mass from out the midst of which some scattered lights were shining starlike in the gloom.

He tried to breathe, and, thinking his cravat was choking him, he tore it off and threw it on the road.

Thus, mounted on his black horse, wrapped in his black cloak, and long ago bareheaded (his hat had fallen off), Gaston was like some fiendish cavalier bound to the witches' Sabbath.

On reaching the gates of Nantes his horse stumbled, but Gaston did not lose his stirrups, pulled him up sharply, and driving the spurs into his sides, he made him recover himself.

The night was dark, no one appeared upon the ramparts, the very sentinels were hidden in the gloom, it seemed like a deserted city.

But as he passed the gate a sentinel said something which Gaston did not even hear.

He held on his way.

At the Rue du Château his horse stumbled and fell, this time to rise no more.

What mattered it to Gaston now? — he had arrived. On he went on foot; his limbs were strained and deadened, yet he felt no fatigue, he held the paper crumpled in his hand.

One thing, however, astonished him, and that was meeting no one in so populous a quarter.

As he advanced, however, he heard a sullen murmur coming from the Place de Bouffay, as he passed before a long street which led into that Place.

There was a sea of heads, lit up by flaring lights; but Gaston passed on — his business was at the castle — and the sight disappeared.

At last he saw the castle — he saw the door gaping wide before him. The sentinel on guard upon the drawbridge tried to stop him; but Gaston, his order in his hand, pushed him roughly aside and entered the inner door.

Men were talking, and one of them wiping his tears off as he talked.

Gaston understood it all.

“A reprieve!” he cried, “A re—”

The word died upon his lips; but the men had done better than hear, they had seen his despairing gesture.

“Go, go!” they cried, showing him the way, “go! and, perhaps you may yet arrive in time.”

And they themselves dispersed in all directions. Gaston pursued his way; he traversed a corridor, then some empty rooms, then the great chamber, and then another corridor.

Far off, through the bars, by the torchlight, he perceived the great crowd of which he had caught a glimpse before.

He had passed right through the castle, and issued on a terrace; thence he perceived the esplanade, a scaffold, men, and all around the crowd.

Gaston tried to cry, but no one heard him, he waved his handkerchief, but no one saw him; another man mounts on the scaffold, and Gaston uttered a cry and threw himself down below.

He had leaped from the top of the rampart to the bottom. A sentinel tried to stop him, but he threw him down, and descended a sort of staircase which led down to the square, and at the bottom was a sort of barricade of wagons. Gaston bent down and glided between the wheels.

Beyond the barricade were all St. Simon's grenadiers, — a living hedge; Gaston, with a desperate effort, broke through the line, and found himself inside the ring.

The soldiers, seeing a man, pale and breathless, with a paper in his hand, allowed him to pass.

All of a sudden he stopped, as if struck by lightning. Talhouet! — he saw him! — Talhouet kneeling on the scaffold!

"Stop! stop!" cried Gaston, with all the energy of despair.

But even as he spoke the sword of the executioner flashed like lightning, a dull and heavy blow followed, and a terrible shudder ran through all the crowd.

The young man's shriek was lost in the general cry arising from twenty thousand palpitating breasts at once.

He had arrived a moment too late, — Talhouet was dead: and, as he lifted his eyes, he saw in the hand of the headsmen the bleeding head of his friend, — and then, in the nobility of his heart, he felt that, one being dead, they all should die. That not one of them would accept a pardon which arrived a head too late. He looked around him; Du Couedic mounted in his turn, clothed with his black mantel, bare-headed and bare-necked.

Gaston remembered that he also had a black mantel, and that his head and neck were bare, and he laughed convulsively.

He saw what remained for him to do, as one sees some wild landscape by the lightning's livid gleam, — 't is awful, but grand.

Du Couedic bends down; but, as he bends, he cries: "See how they recompense the services of faithful soldiers! — see how you keep your promises, oh ye cowards of Bretagne!"

Two assistants force him on his knees; the sword of the executioner whirls round and gleams again, and Du Couedic lies beside Talhouet.

The executioner takes up the head; shows it to the

people; and then places it at one corner of the scaffold, opposite that of Talhouet.

"Who next?" asks Waters.

"It matters little," answers a voice, "provided that **Monsieur de Pontcalec** be the last, according to his sentence."

"I, then," says Montlouis, "I." And he springs upon the scaffold. But there he stops, his hair bristling; at a window before him he has seen his wife and his children.

"Montlouis! Montlouis!" cries his wife, with the despairing accent of a breaking heart, "Montlouis! look at us!"

At the same moment all eyes were turned towards that window. Soldiers, citizens, priests, and executioners look the same way. Gaston profits by the deathlike silence which reigns around him, springs to the scaffold, and grasps the staircase and mounts the first steps.

"My wife! my children!" cries Montlouis, wringing his hands in despair; "oh! go, have pity upon me!"

"Montlouis!" cries his wife, holding up afar the youngest of his sons, "Montlouis, bless your children, and one day, perhaps, one of them will avenge you."

"Adieu! my children, my blessing on you!" cries Montlouis, stretching his hands towards the window.

These mournful adieus pierce the night, and reverberate like a terrible echo in the hearts of the spectators.

"Enough," says Waters, "enough." Then, turning to his assistants, —

"Be quick!" says he, "or the people will not allow us to finish."

"Be easy," says Montlouis; "if the people should rescue me, I would not survive them."

And he pointed with his finger to the heads of his companions.

"Ah, I had estimated them rightly, then," cried Gaston, who heard these words, "Montlouis, martyr, pray for me."

Montlouis turned round, he seemed to have heard a well-

known voice; but at the very moment the executioner seized him, and almost instantly a loud cry told Gaston that Montlouis was like the others, and that *his* turn was come.

He leapt up; in a moment he was on the top of the ladder, and he in his turn looked down from the abominable platform upon all that crowd. At three corners of the scaffold were the heads of Talhouet, Du Couëdic, and Montlouis.

But there arose then a strange emotion in the people. The execution of Montlouis, attended by the circumstances we have narrated, had upset the crowd. All the square, heaving and uttering murmurs and imprecations, seemed to Gaston some vast sea with life in every wave. At this moment the idea flashed across him that he might be recognised, and that his name uttered by a single mouth might prevent his carrying out his intention. He fell on his knees, and laid his head himself upon the block.

"Adieu!" he murmured, "adieu my friends, my tender, dear Hélène; thy nuptial kiss has cost me my life indeed, but not mine honour. Alas! those fifteen minutes wasted in thine arms will have struck down five heads. Adieu! Hélène, adieu!"

The sword of the executioner gleamed.

"And you, my friends, pardon me," added the young man.

The steel fell; the head rolled one way, and the body fell the other.

Then Waters raised the head and showed it to the people.

But then a mighty murmur rose from the crowd; no one had recognised Pontcalec.

The executioner mistook the meaning of this murmur; he placed Gaston's head at the empty corner, and with his foot pushing the body into the tumbril where those of his three companions awaited it, he leant upon his sword, and cried aloud, —

"Justice is done."

"And, I, then," cried a voice of thunder, "am I to be forgotten?"

And Pontcalec, in his turn leapt upon the scaffold.

"You!" cried Waters, recoiling as if he had seen a ghost. "You! who are you?"

"I," said Pontcalec; "come, I am ready."

"But," said the executioner trembling, and looking one after the other at the four corners of the scaffold — "but there are four heads already."

"I am the Baron de Pontcalec, do you hear? I am to die the last, — and here I am."

"Count," said Waters, as pale as the baron, pointing with his sword to the four corners.

"Four heads!" exclaimed Pontcalec; "impossible." At this moment he recognised in one of the heads the pale and noble face of Gaston, which seemed to smile upon him even in death.

And he in his turn started back in terror.

"Oh, kill me then quickly!" he cried, groaning with impatience; "would you make me die a thousand times?"

During this interval, one of the commissioners had mounted the ladder, called by the chief executioner. He cast a glance upon Pontcalec.

"It is indeed the Baron de Pontcalec," said the commissioner; "perform your office."

"But," cried the executioner, "there are four heads there already."

"Well, then, his will make five; better too many than too few."

And the commissioner descended the steps, signing to the drums to beat.

Waters reeled upon the boards of his scaffold. The tumult increased. The horror was more than the crowd could bear. A long murmur ran along the square; the lights were put out; the soldiers, driven back, cried, "To arms!" there was a moment of noise and confusion, and several voices exclaimed, —

"Death to the commissioners! death to the executioners!" Then the guns of the fort, loaded with grape, were pointed towards the people.

"What shall I do?" asked Waters.

"Strike," answered the same voice which had always spoken.

Pontcalec threw himself on his knees; the assistants placed his head upon the block. Then the priests fled in horror, the soldiers trembled in the gloom, and Waters, as he struck, turned away his head lest he should see his victim. Ten minutes afterwards the square was empty, — the windows closed and dark. The artillery and the fusiliers encamped around the demolished scaffold looked in silence on the spots of blood that incarnadined the pavement.

The priests to whom the bodies were delivered recognised that there were indeed, as Waters had said, five bodies instead of four. One of the corpses still held a crumpled paper in his hand.

This paper was the pardon of the other four. Then only was all explained, — and the devotion of Gaston, which he had confided to no one, was divined.

The priests wished to perform a mass, but the president, Châteauneuf, fearing some disturbance at Nantes, ordered it to be performed without pomp or ceremony.

The bodies were buried on the Wednesday before Easter. The people were not permitted to enter the chapel where the mutilated bodies reposed, the greater part of which, report says, the quicklime refused to destroy.

And this finished the tragedy of Nantes.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE END.

A FORTNIGHT after the events we have just related, a queer carriage, the same which we saw arrive at Paris at the commencement of this history, went out at the same barrier by which it had entered, and proceeded along the road from Paris to Nantes. A young woman, pale and almost dying, was seated in it by the side of an Augustine nun, who uttered a sigh and wiped away a tear every time she looked at her companion.

A man on horseback was watching for the carriage a little beyond Rambouillet. He was wrapped in a large cloak which left nothing visible but his eyes.

Near him was another man also enveloped in a cloak.

When the carriage passed, he heaved a deep sigh, and two silent tears fell from his eyes.

"Adieu!" he murmured, "adieu all my joy, adieu my happiness! adieu Hélène, my child, adieu!"

"Monseigneur," said the man beside him, "you must pay for being a great prince; and he who would govern others must first conquer himself. Be strong to the end, monseigneur, and posterity will say that you were great."

"Oh, I shall never forgive you," said the regent, with a sigh so deep it sounded like a groan; "for you have killed my happiness."

"Ah, yes! — work for kings," said the companion of this sorrowful man, shrugging his shoulders. "'Noli fidere principibus terræ nec filiis eorum.'"

The two men remained there till the carriage had disappeared, and then returned to Paris.

Eight days afterwards the carriage entered the porch of the Augustines at Clisson. On its arrival, all the convent pressed round the suffering traveller, — poor floweret! broken by the rough winds of the world.

"Come, my child; come and live with us again," said the superior.

"Not live, my mother," said the young girl, "but die."

"Think only of the Lord, my child," said the good abbess.

"Yes, my mother! Our Lord, who died for the sins of men."

Hélène returned to her little cell, from which she had been absent scarcely a month. Everything was still in its place, and exactly as she had left it. She went to the window: the lake was sleeping tranquil and sad, but the ice which had covered it had disappeared beneath the rain, and with it the snow, where, before departing, the young girl had seen the impression of Gaston's footsteps.

Spring came, and everything but Hélène began to live once more. The trees around the little lake grew green, the large leaves of the water-lilies floated once more upon the surface, the reeds raised up their heads, and all the families of warbling birds came back to people them again. Even the barred gate opened to let the sturdy gardener in.

Hélène survived the summer, but in September she faded with the waning of the year, and died.

The very morning of her death, the superior received a letter from Paris by a courier. She carried it to the dying girl. It contained only these words: —

"My mother, obtain from your daughter her pardon for the regent."

Hélène, implored by the superior, grew paler at that name, but she answered, —

"Yes, my mother, I forgive him. But it is because I go to rejoin him whom he killed."

At four o'clock in the afternoon she breathed her last.

She asked to be buried at the spot where Gaston used to untie the boat with which he came to visit her; and her last wishes were complied with.

And there she sleeps beneath the sod, pure as the flowers that blossom over her grave; and, like them, broken by the cruel gusts that sweep the delicate blossoms so mercilessly down, and wither them with a breath.

THE BLACK TULIP.

THE BLACK TULIP.

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THE BLACK TULIP.

CHAPTER I.

A GRATEFUL PEOPLE.

ON the 20th of August, 1672, the city of the Hague, always so lively, so neat, and so trim that one might believe every day to be Sunday, with its shady park, with its tall trees, spreading over its Gothic houses, with its canals like large mirrors, in which its steeples and its almost Eastern cupolas are reflected, — the city of the Hague, the capital of the Seven United Provinces, was swelling in all its arteries with a black and red stream of hurried, panting, and restless citizens, who, with their knives in their girdles, muskets on their shoulders, or sticks in their hands, were pushing on to the Buytenhof, a terrible prison, the grated windows of which are still shown, where, on the charge of attempted murder preferred against him by the surgeon Tyckelaer, Cornelius de Witt, the brother of the Grand Pensionary of Holland, was confined.

If the history of that time, and especially that of the year in the middle of which our narrative commences, were not indissolubly connected with the two names just mentioned, the few explanatory pages which we are about to add might appear quite supererogatory ; but we will, from the very first, apprise the reader — our old friend, to whom we are wont on the first page to promise amusement, and with whom we always try to keep our word as well as is in our power — *that this explanation is as indispensable to*

the right understanding of our story as to that of the great event itself on which it is based.

Cornelius de Witt, Ruart de Pulten, that is to say, warden of the dikes, ex-burgomaster of Dort, his native town, and member of the Assembly of the States of Holland, was forty-nine years of age, when the Dutch people, tired of the Republic such as John de Witt, the Grand Pensionary of Holland, understood it, at once conceived a most violent affection for the Stadtholderate, which had been abolished for ever in Holland by the "Perpetual Edict" forced by John de Witt upon the United Provinces.

As it rarely happens that public opinion, in its whimsical flights, does not identify a principle with a man, thus the people saw the personification of the Republic in the two stern figures of the brothers De Witt, those Romans of Holland, spurning to pander to the fancies of the mob, and wedding themselves with unbending fidelity to liberty without licentiousness, and prosperity without the waste of superfluity; on the other hand, the Stadtholderate recalled to the popular mind the grave and thoughtful image of the young Prince William of Orange.

The brothers De Witt humoured Louis XIV., whose moral influence was felt by the whole of Europe, and the pressure of whose material power Holland had been made to feel in that marvellous campaign on the Rhine which, in the space of three months, had laid the power of the United Provinces prostrate.

Louis XIV. had long been the enemy of the Dutch, who insulted or ridiculed him to their hearts' content, although it must be said, that they generally used French refugees for the mouthpiece of their spite. Their national pride held him up as the Mithridates of the Republic. The brothers De Witt, therefore, had to strive against a double difficulty,—against the force of national antipathy, and, besides, against the feeling of weariness which is natural to all vanquished people, when they hope that a new chief will be able to save them from ruin and shame.

This new chief, quite ready to appear on the political stage, and to measure himself against Louis XIV., however gigantic the fortunes of the Grand Monarch loomed in the future, was William, Prince of Orange, son of William II., and grandson, by his mother Henrietta Stuart, of Charles I. of England. We have mentioned him before as the person by whom the people expected to see the office of Stadtholder restored.

This young man was, in 1672, twenty-two years of age. John de Witt, who was his tutor, had brought him up with the view of making him a good citizen. Loving his country better than he did his disciple, the master had, by the Perpetual Edict, extinguished the hope which the young Prince might have entertained of one day becoming Stadtholder. But God laughs at the presumption of man, who wants to raise and prostrate the powers on earth without consulting the King above; and the fickleness and caprice of the Dutch combined with the terror inspired by Louis XIV., in repealing the Perpetual Edict, and re-establishing the office of Stadtholder in favour of William of Orange, for whom the hand of Providence had traced out ulterior destinies on the hidden map of the future.

The Grand Pensionary bowed before the will of his fellow citizens; Cornelius de Witt, however, was more obstinate, and notwithstanding all the threats of death from the Orangist rabble, who besieged him in his house at Dort, he stoutly refused to sign the act by which the office of Stadtholder was restored. Moved by the tears and entreaties of his wife, he at last complied, only adding to his signature the two letters V. C. (*Vi Coactus*), notifying thereby that he only yielded to force.

It was a real miracle that on that day he escaped from the doom intended for him.

John de Witt derived no advantage from his ready compliance with the wishes of his fellow citizens. Only a few days after, an attempt was made to stab him, in which he was severely although not mortally wounded.

This by no means suited the views of the Orange faction. The life of the two brothers being a constant obstacle to their plans, they changed their tactics, and tried to obtain by calumny what they had not been able to effect by the aid of the poniard.

How rarely does it happen that, in the right moment, a great man is found to head the execution of vast and noble designs; and for that reason, when such a providential concurrence of circumstances does occur, history is prompt to record the name of the chosen one, and to hold him up to the admiration of posterity. But when Satan interposes in human affairs to cast a shadow upon some happy existence, or to overthrow a kingdom, it seldom happens that he does not find at his side some miserable tool, in whose ear he has but to whisper a word to set him at once about his task.

The wretched tool who was at hand to be the agent of this dastardly plot was one Tyckelaer, whom we have already mentioned, a surgeon by profession.

He lodged an information against Cornelius de Witt, setting forth that the warden—who, as he had shown by the letters added to his signature, was fuming at the repeal of the Perpetual Edict—had, from hatred against William of Orange, hired an assassin to deliver the new Republic of its new Stadtholder; and he, Tyckelaer, was the person thus chosen; but that, horrified at the bare idea of the act which he was asked to perpetrate, he had preferred rather to reveal the crime than to commit it.

This disclosure was, indeed, well calculated to call forth a furious outbreak among the Orange faction. The Attorney General caused, on the 16th of August, 1672, Cornelius de Witt to be arrested; and the noble brother of John de Witt had, like the vilest criminal, to undergo, in one of the apartments of the town prison, the preparatory degrees of torture, by means of which his judges expected to force from him the confession of his alleged plot against William of Orange.

But Cornelius was not only possessed of a great mind, but also of a great heart. He belonged to that race of martyrs who, indissolubly wedded to their political convictions as their ancestors were to their faith, are able to smile on pain : while being stretched on the rack, he recited with a firm voice, and scanning the lines according to measure, the first strophe of the "*Justum ac tenacem*" of Horace ; and, making no confession, tired, not only the strength, but even the fanaticism, of his executioners.

The judges, notwithstanding, acquitted Tyckelaer from every charge ; at the same time sentencing Cornelius to be deposed from all his offices and dignities ; to pay all the costs of the trial ; and to be banished from the soil of the Republic for ever.

This judgment against not only an innocent, but also a great man, was indeed some gratification to the passions of the people, to whose interests Cornelius de Witt had always devoted himself : but, as we shall soon see, it was not enough.

The Athenians, who indeed have left behind them a pretty tolerable reputation for ingratitude, have in this respect to yield precedence to the Dutch. They, at least in the case of Aristides, contented themselves with banishing him.

John de Witt, at the first intimation of the charge brought against his brother, had resigned his office of Grand Pensionary. He too received a noble recompense for his devotedness to the best interests of his country, taking with him into the retirement of private life the hatred of a host of enemies, and the fresh scars of wounds inflicted by assassins, only too often the sole guerdon obtained by honest people, who are guilty of having worked for their country, and of having forgotten their own private interests.

In the mean while William of Orange urged on the course of events by every means in his power, eagerly waiting for the time when the people, by whom he was idolised, should have made of the bodies of the brothers the two steps over which he might ascend to the chair of Stadtholder.

Thus, then, on the 20th of August, 1672, as we have already stated in the beginning of this chapter, the whole town was crowding towards the Buytenhof, to witness the departure of Cornelius de Witt from prison, as he was going to exile; and to see what traces the torture of the rack had left on the noble frame of the man who knew his Horace so well.

Yet all this multitude was not crowding to the Buytenhof with the innocent view of merely feasting their eyes with the spectacle; there were many who went there to play an active part in it, and to take upon themselves an office which they conceived had been badly filled, — that of the executioner.

There were, indeed, others with less hostile intentions. All that they cared for was the spectacle, always so attractive to the mob, whose instinctive pride is flattered by it, — the sight of greatness hurled down into the dust.

“Has not,” they would say, “this Cornelius de Witt been locked up and broken by the rack? Shall we not see him pale, streaming with blood, covered with shame?” And was not this a sweet triumph for the burghers of the Hague, whose envy even beat that of the common rabble; a triumph in which every honest citizen and townsman might be expected to share?

“Moreover,” hinted the Orange agitators interspersed through the crowd, whom they hoped to manage like a sharp-edged and at the same time crushing instrument, — “moreover, will there not, from the Buytenhof to the gate of the town, a nice little opportunity present itself to throw some handfuls of dirt, or a few stones, at this Cornelius de Witt, who not only conferred the dignity of Stadtholder on the Prince of Orange merely *vi coactus*, but who also intended to have him assassinated?”

“Besides which,” the fierce enemies of France chimed in, “if the work were done well and bravely at the Hague, Cornelius would certainly not be allowed to go into exile, where he will renew his intrigues with France, and live

with his big scoundrel of a brother, John, on the gold of the Marquis de Louvois."

Being in such a temper, people generally will run rather than walk; which was the reason why the inhabitants of the Hague were hurrying so fast towards the Buytenhof.

Honest Tyckelaer, with a heart full of spite and malice, and with no particular plan settled in his mind, was one of the foremost, being paraded about by the Orange party like a hero of probity, national honour, and Christian charity.

This daring miscreant detailed, with all the embellishments and flourishes suggested by his base mind and his ruffianly imagination, the attempts which he pretended Cornelius de Witt had made to corrupt him; the sums of money which were promised; and all the diabolical stratagems planned beforehand to smooth for him, Tyckelaer, all the difficulties in the path of murder.

And every phase of his speech, eagerly listened to by the populace, called forth enthusiastic cheers for the Prince of Orange, and groans and imprecations of blind fury against the brothers De Witt.

The mob even began to vent its rage by inveighing against the iniquitous judges, who had allowed such a detestable criminal as the villain Cornelius to get off so cheaply.

Some of the agitators whispered, "He will be off, he will escape from us!"

Others replied, "A vessel is waiting for him at Schevening, a French craft. Tyckelaer has seen her."

"Honest Tyckelaer! Hurrah for Tyckelaer!" the mob cried in chorus.

"And let us not forget," a voice exclaimed from the crowd, "that at the same time with Cornelius his brother John, who is as rascally a traitor as himself, will likewise make his escape."

"And the two rogues will in France make merry with our money, with the money for our vessels, our arsenals, and our dockyards, which they have sold to Louis XIV."

"Well, then, don't let us allow them to depart!" ad

vised one of the patriots who had gained the start of the others.

“Forward to the prison, to the prison!” echoed the crowd.

Amid these cries, the citizens ran along faster and faster, cocking their muskets, brandishing their hatchets, and looking death and defiance in all directions.

No violence, however, had as yet been committed; and the file of horsemen who were guarding the approaches of the Buytenhof remained cool, unmoved, silent, much more threatening in their impassibility than all this crowd of burghers, with their cries, their agitation, and their threats. The men on their horses, indeed, stood like so many statues, under the eye of their chief, Count Tilly, the captain of the mounted troops of the Hague, who had his sword drawn, but held it with its point downwards, in a line with the straps of his stirrup.

This troop, the only defence of the prison, overawed by its firm attitude not only the disorderly riotous mass of the populace, but also the detachment of the burgher guard, which, being placed opposite the Buytenhof to support the soldiers in keeping order, gave to the rioters the example of seditious cries, shouting, —

“Hurrah for Orange! Down with the traitors!”

The presence of Tilly and his horsemen, indeed, exercised a salutary check on these civic warriors; but by degrees they waxed more and more angry by their own shouts, and as they were not able to understand how any one could have courage without showing it by cries, they attributed the silence of the dragoons to pusillanimity, and advanced one step towards the prison, with all the turbulent mob following in their wake.

In this moment, Count Tilly rode forth towards them single-handed, merely lifting his sword and contracting his brow whilst he addressed them: —

“Well, gentlemen of the burgher guard, what are you advancing for, and what do you wish?”

The burghers shook their muskets, repeating their cry, —
“Hurrah for Orange! Death to the traitors!”

“‘Hurrah for Orange!’ all well and good!” replied Tilly, “although I certainly am more partial to happy faces than to gloomy ones. ‘Death to the traitors!’ as much of it as you like, as long as you show your wishes only by cries. But, as to putting them to death in good earnest, I am here to prevent that, and I shall prevent it.”

Then, turning round to his men, he gave the word of command, —

“Soldiers, ready!”

The troopers obeyed orders with a precision which immediately caused the burgher guard and the people to fall back, in a degree of confusion which excited the smile of the cavalry officer.

“Halloa!” he exclaimed, with that bantering tone which is peculiar to men of his profession; “be easy, gentlemen, my soldiers will not fire a shot; but, on the other hand, you will not advance by one step towards the prison.”

“And do you know, sir, that we have muskets?” roared the commandant of the burghers.

“I must know it, by Jove, you have made them glitter enough before my eyes; but I beg you to observe also that we on our side have pistols, that the pistol carries admirably to a distance of fifty yards, and that you are only twenty-five from us.”

“Death to the traitors!” cried the exasperated burghers.

“Go along with you,” growled the officer, “you always cry the same thing over again. It is very tiresome.”

With this, he took his post at the head of his troops, whilst the tumult grew fiercer and fiercer about the Buytenhof.

And yet the fuming crowd did not know that, at that very moment when they were tracking the scent of one of their victims, the other, as if hurrying to meet his fate, passed, at a distance of not more than a hundred yards, behind the groups of people and the dragoons, to betake himself to the Buytenhof.

John de Witt, indeed, had alighted from his coach with his servant, and quietly walked across the court-yard of the prison.

Mentioning his name to the turnkey, who however knew him, he said, —

“Good morning, Gryphus; I am coming to take away my brother, who, as you know, is condemned to exile, and to carry him out of the town.”

Whereupon the jailer, a sort of bear, trained to lock and unlock the gates of the prison, had greeted him and admitted him into the building, the doors of which were immediately closed again.

Ten yards farther on, John de Witt met a lovely young girl, of about seventeen or eighteen, dressed in the national costume of the Frisian women, who, with pretty demureness, dropped a curtesy to him. Chucking her under the chin, he said to her, —

“Good morning, my good and fair Rosa; how is my brother?”

“Oh, Mynheer John!” the young girl replied, “I am not afraid of the harm which has been done to him. That’s all over now.”

“But what is it you are afraid of?”

“I am afraid of the harm which they are going to do to him.”

“Oh, yes,” said De Witt; “you mean to speak of the people down below, don’t you?”

“Do you hear them?”

“They are indeed in a state of great excitement; but when they see us perhaps they will grow calmer, as we have never done them anything but good.”

“That’s unfortunately no reason, except for the contrary,” muttered the girl, as, on an imperative sign from her father, she withdrew.

“Indeed, child, what you say is only too true.”

Then, in pursuing his way, he said to himself,—

“Here is a damsel who very likely does not know how

to read, who consequently has never read anything, and yet with one word she has just told the whole history of the world."

And with the same calm mien, but more melancholy than he had been on entering the prison, the Grand Pensionary proceeded towards the cell of his brother.

CHAPTER II.

THE TWO BROTHERS.

As the fair Rosa, with foreboding doubt, had foretold, so it happened. Whilst John de Witt was climbing the narrow winding stairs which led to the prison of his brother Cornelius, the burghers did their best to have the troop of Tilly, which was in their way, removed.

Seeing this disposition, King Mob, who fully appreciated the laudable intentions of his own beloved militia, shouted most lustily, —

“Hurrah for the burghers !”

As to Count Tilly, who was as prudent as he was firm, he began to parley with the burghers, under the protection of the cocked pistols of his dragoons, explaining to the valiant townsmen, that his order from the States commanded him to guard the prison and its approaches with three companies.

“Wherefore such an order? Why guard the prison?” cried the Orangists.

“Stop,” replied the Count; “there you at once ask me more than I can tell you. I was told, ‘Guard the prison,’ and I guard it. You, gentlemen, who are almost military men yourselves, you are aware that an order must never be gainsaid.”

“But this order has been given to you that the traitors may be enabled to leave the town.”

“Very possibly, as the traitors are condemned to exile,” replied Tilly.

“But who has given this order?”

“The States, to be sure !”

"The States are traitors."

"I don't know anything about that!"

"And you are a traitor yourself!"

"I?"

"Yes, you."

"Well, as to that, let us understand each other, gentlemen. Whom should I betray? The States? Why, I cannot betray them, whilst, being in their pay, I faithfully obey their orders."

As the Count was so indisputably in the right that it was impossible to argue against him, the mob answered only by redoubled clamour and horrible threats, to which the Count opposed the most perfect urbanity.

"Gentlemen," he said, "uncock your muskets; one of them may go off by accident, and if the shot chanced to wound one of my men, we should knock over a couple of hundreds of yours, for which we should, indeed, be very sorry, but you even more so; especially as such a thing is neither contemplated by you nor by myself."

"If you did that," cried the burghers, "we should have a pop at you, too."

"Of course you would; but suppose you killed every man Jack of us, those whom we should have killed would not, for all that, be less dead."

"Then leave the place to us, and you will perform the part of a good citizen."

"First of all," said the Count, "I am not a citizen, but an officer, which is a very different thing; and, secondly, I am not a Hollander, but a Frenchman, which is more different still. I have to do with no one but the States, by whom I am paid; let me see an order from them to leave the place to you, and I shall only be too glad to wheel off in an instant, as I am confoundedly bored here."

"Yes, yes!" cried a hundred voices; the din of which was immediately swelled by five hundred others; "let us march to the Town-hall; let us go and see the deputies! Come along! come along!"

"That's it," Tilly muttered between his teeth, as he saw the most violent among the crowd turning away; "go and ask for a meanness at the Town-hall, and you will see whether they will grant it; go, my fine fellows, go!"

The worthy officer relied on the honour of the magistrates, who, on their side, relied on his honour as a soldier.

"I say, Captain," the first lieutenant whispered into the ear of the Count, "I hope the deputies will give these madmen a flat refusal; but, after all, it would do no harm if they would send us some reinforcement."

In the mean while, John de Witt, whom we left climbing the stairs, after the conversation with the jailer Gryphus and his daughter Rosa, had reached the door of the cell where on a mattress his brother Cornelius was resting, after having undergone the preparatory degrees of the torture. The sentence of banishment having been pronounced, there was no occasion for inflicting the torture extraordinary.

Cornelius was stretched on his couch, with broken wrists and crushed fingers. He had not confessed a crime of which he was not guilty; and now, after three days of agony, he once more breathed freely, on being informed that the judges, from whom he had expected death, were only condemning him to exile.

Endowed with an iron frame and a stout heart, how would he have disappointed his enemies if they could only have seen, in the dark cell of the Buytenhof, his pale face lit up by the smile of the martyr, who forgets the dross of this earth after having obtained a glimpse of the bright glory of heaven.

The warden, indeed, had already recovered his full strength, much more owing to the force of his own strong will than to actual aid; and he was calculating how long the formalities of the law would still detain him in prison.

This was just at the very moment when the mingled shouts of the burgher guard and of the mob were raging against the two brothers, and threatening Captain Tilly,



CORNELIS DE WIL
BURGERMEESTER VAN DORDRECHT EN
RUWARI VAN DEN LANDE VAN PUTTEN &c

who served as a rampart to them. This noise, which roared outside of the walls of the prison, as the surf dashing against the rocks, now reached the ears of the prisoner.

But, threatening as it sounded, Cornelius appeared not to dream it worth his while to inquire after its cause; nor did he get up to look out of the narrow grated window, which gave access to the light and to the noise of the world without.

He was so absorbed in his never-ceasing pain that it had almost become a habit with him. He felt with such delight the bonds which connected his immortal being with his perishable frame gradually loosening, that it seemed to him as if his spirit, freed from the trammels of the body, were hovering above it, like the expiring flame which rises from the half-extinguished embers.

He also thought of his brother; and whilst the latter was thus vividly present to his mind the door opened, and John entered, hurrying to the bedside of the prisoner, who stretched out his broken limbs and his hands tied up in bandages towards that glorious brother, whom he now excelled, not in services rendered to the country, but in the hatred which the Dutch bore him."

John tenderly kissed his brother on the forehead, and put his sore hands gently back on the mattress.

"Cornelius, my poor brother, you are suffering great pain, are you not?"

"I am suffering no longer, since I see you, my brother."

"Oh, my poor dear Cornelius! I feel most wretched to see you in such a state."

"And, indeed, I have thought more of you than of myself; and whilst they were torturing me, I never thought of uttering a complaint, except once, to say, 'Poor brother!' But now that you are here, let us forget all. You are coming to take me away, are you not?"

"I am."

"I am quite healed; help me to get up, and you shall see how I can walk."

"You will not have to walk far, as I have my coach near the pond, behind Tilly's dragoons."

"Tilly's dragoons! What are they near the pond for?"

"Well," said the Grand Pensionary with a melancholy smile which was habitual to him, "the gentlemen at the Town-hall expect that the people at the Hague would like to see you depart, and there is some apprehension of a tumult."

"Of a tumult?" replied Cornelius, fixing his eyes on his perplexed brother; "a tumult?"

"Yes, Cornelius."

"Oh! that's what I heard just now," said the prisoner, as if speaking to himself. Then, turning to his brother, he continued, —

"Are there many persons down before the prison?"

"Yes, my brother, there are."

"But then, to come here to me —"

"Well?"

"How is it that they have allowed you to pass?"

"You know well that we are not very popular, Cornelius," said the Grand Pensionary, with gloomy bitterness. "I have made my way through all sorts of by-streets and alleys."

"You hid yourself, John?"

"I wished to reach you without loss of time, and I did what people will do in politics, or on the sea when the wind is against them, — I tacked."

At this moment the noise in the square below was heard to roar with increasing fury. Tilly was parleying with the burghers.

"Well, well," said Cornelius, "you are a very skilful pilot, John; but I doubt whether you will as safely guide your brother out of the Buytenhof in the midst of this gale, and through the raging surf of popular hatred, as you did the fleet of Van Tromp past the shoals of the Scheldt to Antwerp."

"With the help of God, Cornelius, we'll at least try," answered John; "but, first of all, a word with you."

"Speak!"

The shouts began anew.

"Hark, hark!" continued Cornelius, "how angry those people are! Is it against you, or against me?"

"I should say it is against us both, Cornelius. I told you, my dear brother, that the Orange party, while assailing us with their absurd calumnies, have also made it a reproach against us that we have negotiated with France."

"What blockheads they are!"

"But, indeed, they reproach us with it."

"And yet, if these negotiations had been successful, they would have prevented the defeats of Rees, Orsay, Wesel, and Rheinberg; the Rhine would not have been crossed, and Holland might still consider herself invincible in the midst of her marshes and canals."

"All this is quite true, my dear Cornelius; but still more certain it is, that if at this moment our correspondence with the Marquis de Louvois were discovered, skilful pilot as I am, I should not be able to save the frail barque which is to carry the brothers De Witt and their fortunes out of Holland. That correspondence, which might prove to honest people how dearly I love my country, and what sacrifices I have offered to make for its liberty and glory, would be ruin to us if it fell into the hands of the Orange party. I hope you have burned the letters before you left Dort to join me at the Hague."

"My dear brother," Cornelius answered, "your correspondence with M. de Louvois affords ample proof of your having been of late the greatest, most generous, and most able citizen of the Seven United Provinces. I rejoice in the glory of my country; and particularly do I rejoice in your glory, John. I have taken good care not to burn that correspondence."

"Then we are lost, as far as this life is concerned," quietly said the Grand Pensionary, approaching the window.

"No, on the contrary, John, we shall at the same time save our lives and regain our popularity."

"But what have you done with these letters?"

"I have intrusted them to the care of Cornelius van Baerle, my godson, whom you know, and who lives at Dort."

"Poor honest Van Baerle! who knows so much, and yet thinks of nothing but of flowers and of God who made them. You have intrusted him with this fatal secret; it will be his ruin, poor soul!"

"His ruin?"

"Yes, for he will either be strong or he will be weak. If he is strong, he will, when he hears of what has happened to us, boast of our acquaintance; if he is weak, he will be afraid on account of his connection with us: if he is strong, he will betray the secret by his boldness; if he is weak, he will allow it to be forced from him. In either case he is lost, and so are we. Let us, therefore, fly, fly, as long as there is still time."

Cornelius de Witt, raising himself on his couch, and grasping the hand of his brother, who shuddered at the touch of his linen bandages, replied, —

"Do not I know my godson? have not I been enabled to read every thought in Van Baerle's mind, and every sentiment in his heart? You ask whether he is strong or weak. He is neither the one nor the other; but that is not now the question. The principal point is, that he is sure not to divulge the secret, for the very good reason that he does not know it himself."

John turned round in surprise.

"You must know, my dear brother, that I have been trained in the school of that distinguished politician John de Witt; and I repeat to you, that Van Baerle is not aware of the nature and importance of the deposit which I have intrusted to him."

"Quick then," cried John, "as there is still time, let us convey to him directions to burn the parcel."

"Through whom?"

"Through my servant Craeke, who was to have accompanied us on horseback, and who has entered the prison with me, to assist you down stairs."

"Consider well before having those precious documents burnt, John!"

"I consider, above all things, that the brothers De Witt must necessarily save their lives, to be able to save their character. If we are dead, who will defend us? Who will have fully understood our intentions?"

"You expect, then, that they would kill us if those papers were found?"

John, without answering, pointed with his hand to the square, whence, at that very moment, fierce shouts and savage yells made themselves heard.

"Yes, yes," said Cornelius, "I hear these shouts very plainly, but what is their meaning?"

John opened the window.

"Death to the traitors!" howled the populace.

"Do you hear now, Cornelius?"

"To the traitors! that means us!" said the prisoner, raising his eyes to heaven and shrugging his shoulders.

"Yes, it means us," repeated John.

"Where is Craeke?"

"At the door of your cell, I suppose."

"Let him enter then."

John opened the door; the faithful servant was waiting on the threshold.

"Come in, Craeke, and mind well what my brother will tell you."

"No, John; it will not suffice to send a verbal message; unfortunately, I shall be obliged to write."

"And why that?"

"Because Van Baerle will neither give up the parcel nor burn it without a special command to do so."

"But will you be able to write, poor old fellow?" John asked, with a look on the scorched and bruised hands of the unfortunate sufferer.

"If I had pen and ink you would soon see," said Cornelius.

"Here is a pencil, at any rate."

"Have you any paper? for they have left me nothing."

"Here, take this Bible, and tear out the fly leaf."

"Very well, that will do."

"But your writing will be illegible."

"Just leave me alone for that," said Cornelius. "The executioners have indeed pinched me badly enough, but my hand will not tremble once in tracing the few lines which are requisite."

And really Cornelius took the pencil and began to write, when through the white linen bandages drops of blood oozed out which the pressure of the fingers against the pencil squeezed from the raw flesh.

A cold sweat stood on the brow of the Grand Pensionary. Cornelius wrote: —

"MY DEAR GODSON, —

"Burn the parcel which I have intrusted to you. Burn it without looking at it, and without opening it, so that its contents may for ever remain unknown to yourself. Secrets of this description are death to those with whom they are deposited. Burn it, and you will have saved John and Cornelius de Witt.

"Farewell, and love me.

"CORNELIUS DE WITT.

"August 20th, 1672."

John, with tears in his eyes, wiped off a drop of the noble blood which had soiled the leaf, and, after having handed the despatch to Craeke with a last direction, returned to Cornelius, who seemed overcome by intense pain, and near fainting.

"Now," said he, "when honest Craeke sounds his coxswain's whistle, it will be a signal of his being clear of the crowd, and of his having reached the other side of the pond. And then it will be our turn to depart."

Five minutes had not elapsed, before a long and shrill whistle was heard through the din and noise of the square of the Buytenhof.

John gratefully raised his eyes to heaven.

"And now," said he, "let us off, Cornelius."

CHAPTER III.

THE PUPIL OF JOHN DE WITT.

WHILST the clamour of the crowd in the square of Buytenhof, which grew more and more menacing against the two brothers, determined John de Witt to hasten the departure of his brother Cornelius, a deputation of burghers had gone to the Town-hall to demand the withdrawal of Tilly's horse.

It was not far from the Buytenhof to Hoogstraet (High Street); and a stranger, who since the beginning of this scene had watched all its incidents with intense interest, was seen to wend his way with, or rather in the wake of, the others towards the Town-hall, to hear as soon as possible the current news of the hour.

This stranger was a very young man, of scarcely twenty-two or three, with nothing about him that bespoke any great energy. He evidently had his good reasons for not making himself known, as he hid his face in a handkerchief of fine Frisian linen, with which he incessantly wiped his brow or his burning lips.

With an eye keen as that of a bird of prey, — with a long aquiline nose, a finely cut mouth, which he generally kept open, or rather which was gaping like the edges of a wound, — this man would have presented to Lavater, if Lavater had lived at that time, a subject for physiognomical observations which at the first blush would not have been very favourable to the person in question.

“What difference is there between the figure of the conqueror and that of the pirate?” said the ancients. The difference only between the eagle and the vulture, — serenity or restlessness.

And indeed the sallow physiognomy, the thin and sickly body, and the prowling ways of the stranger, were the very type of a suspecting master, or an unquiet thief; and a police officer would certainly have decided in favour of the latter supposition, on account of the great care which the mysterious person evidently took to hide himself.

He was plainly dressed, and apparently unarmed; his arm was lean but wiry; and his hands dry, but of an aristocratic whiteness and delicacy, and he leaned on the shoulder of an officer, who, with his hand on his sword, had watched the scenes in the Buytenhof with eager curiosity, very natural in a military man, until his companion drew him away with him.

On arriving at the square of the Hoogstraet, the man with the sallow face pushed the other behind an open shutter, from which corner he himself began to survey the balcony of the Town-hall.

At the savage yells of the mob, the window of the Town-hall opened, and a man came forth to address the people.

"Who is that on the balcony?" asked the young man, glancing at the orator.

"It is the Deputy Bowelt," replied the officer.

"What sort of a man is he? Do you know anything of him?"

"An honest man; at least I believe so, Monseigneur."

Hearing this character given of Bowelt, the young man showed signs of such a strange disappointment and evident dissatisfaction that the officer could not but remark it, and therefore added, —

"At least people say so, Monseigneur. I cannot say anything about it myself, as I have no personal acquaintance with Mynheer Bowelt."

"An honest man," repeated he who was addressed as Monseigneur; "do you mean to say that he is an honest man (*brave homme*), or a brave one (*homme brave*)?"

"Ah, Monseigneur must excuse me; I would not presume to draw such a fine distinction in the case of a man

whom, I assure your Highness once more, I know only by sight."

"If this Bowelt is an honest man," his Highness continued, "he will give to the demand of these furibund petitioners a very queer reception."

The nervous quiver of his hand, which moved on the shoulder of his companion as the fingers of a player on the keys of a harpsichord, betrayed his burning impatience, so ill concealed at certain times, and particularly at that moment, under the icy and sombre expression of his face.

The chief of the deputation of the burghers was then heard addressing an interpellation to Mynheer Bowelt, whom he requested to let them know where the other deputies, his colleagues, were.

"Gentlemen," Bowelt repeated for the second time, "I assure you that in this moment I am here alone with Mynheer d'Asperen, and I cannot take any resolution on my own responsibility."

"The order! we want the order!" cried several thousand voices.

Mynheer Bowelt wished to speak, but his words were not heard, and he was only seen moving his arms in all sorts of gestures, which plainly showed that he felt his position to be desperate. When, at last, he saw that he could not make himself heard, he turned round towards the open window, and called Mynheer d'Asperen.

The latter gentleman now made his appearance on the balcony, where he was saluted with shouts even more energetic than those with which, ten minutes before, his colleague had been received.

This did not prevent him from undertaking the difficult task of haranguing the mob; but the mob preferred forcing the guard of the States — which, however, offered no resistance to the sovereign people — to listening to the speech of Mynheer d'Asperen.

"Now, then," the young man coolly remarked, whilst the crowd was rushing into the principal gate of the Town-hall,

"it seems the question will be discussed in-doors, Captain. Come along, and let us hear the debate."

"Oh, Monseigneur! Monseigneur! take care!"

"Of what?"

"Among these deputies there are many who have had dealings with you; and it would be sufficient, that one of them should recognise your Highness."

"Yes, that I might be charged with having been the instigator of all this work; indeed, you are right," said the young man, blushing for a moment from regret of having betrayed so much eagerness. "From this place we shall see them return with or without the order for the withdrawal of the dragoons, then we may judge which is greater, Mynheer Bowelt's honesty or his courage."

"But," replied the officer, looking with astonishment at the personage whom he addressed as Monseigneur, "but your Highness surely does not suppose for one instant that the deputies will order Tilly's horse to quit their post?"

"Why not?" the young man quietly retorted.

"Because doing so would simply be signing the death warrant of Cornelius and John de Witt."

"We shall see," his Highness replied, with the most perfect coolness; "God alone knows what is going on within the hearts of men."

The officer looked askance at the impassible figure of his companion, and grew pale: he was an honest man as well as a brave one.

From the spot where they stood, his Highness and his attendant heard the tumult and the heavy tramp of the crowd on the staircase of the Town-hall. The noise thereupon sounded through the windows of the hall, on the balcony of which Mynheers Bowelt and D'Asperen had presented themselves. These two gentlemen had retired into the building, very likely from fear of being forced over the balustrade by the pressure of the crowd.

After this, fluctuating shadows in tumultuous confusion were seen flitting to and fro across the windows: the council hall was filling.

Suddenly the noise subsided; and as suddenly again it rose with redoubled intensity, and at last reached such a pitch that the old building shook to the very roof.

At length, the living stream poured back through the galleries and stairs to the arched gateway, from which it was seen issuing like waters from a spout.

At the head of the first group, a man was flying rather than running, his face hideously distorted with satanic glee: this man was the surgeon Tyckelaer.

"We have it! we have it!" he cried, brandishing a paper in the air.

"They have got the order!" muttered the officer in amazement.

"Well, then," his Highness quietly remarked, "now I know what to believe with regard to Mynheer Bowelt's honesty and courage: he has neither the one nor the other."

Then, looking with a steady glance after the crowd which was rushing along before him, he continued, —

"Let us now go to the Buytenhof, Captain; I expect we shall see a very strange sight there."

The officer bowed, and, without making any reply, followed in the steps of his master.

There was an immense crowd in the square and about the neighbourhood of the prison. But the dragoons of Tilly still kept it in check with the same success and with the same firmness.

It was not long before the Count heard the increasing din of the approaching multitude, the first ranks of which rushed on with the rapidity of a cataract.

At the same time he observed the paper, which was waving above the surface of clenched fists and glittering arms.

"Halloa!" he said, rising in his stirrups, and touching his lieutenant with the knob of his sword; "I really believe those rascals have got the order."

"Dastardly ruffians they are," cried the lieutenant.

It was indeed the order, which the burgher guard received with a roar of triumph. They immediately sallied forth, with lowered arms and fierce shouts, to meet Count Tilly's dragoons.

But the Count was not the man to allow them to approach within an inconvenient distance.

"Stop!" he cried, "stop, and keep off from my horse, or I shall give the word of command to advance."

"Here is the order!" a hundred insolent voices answered at once.

He took it in amazement, cast a rapid glance on it, and said quite aloud, —

"Those who have signed this order are the real murderers of Cornelius de Witt. I would rather have my two hands cut off than have written one single letter of this infamous order."

And, pushing back with the hilt of his sword the man who wanted to take it from him, he added, —

"Wait a minute, papers like this are of importance, and are to be kept."

Saying this, he folded up the document, and carefully put it in the pocket of his coat.

Then, turning round towards his troop, he gave the word of command, —

"Tilly's dragoons! wheel to the right!"

After this, he added, in an undertone, yet loud enough for his words to be not altogether lost to those about him, —

"And now, ye butchers, do your work!"

A savage yell, in which all the keen hatred and ferocious triumph rife in the precincts of the prison simultaneously burst forth, and accompanied the departure of the dragoons, as they were quietly filing off.

The Count tarried behind, facing to the last the infuriated populace, which advanced at the same rate as the Count retired.

John de Witt, therefore, had by no means exaggerated the danger, when, assisting his brother in getting up, he

hurried his departure. Cornelius, leaning on the arm of the Ex-Grand Pensionary, descended the stairs which led to the courtyard. At the bottom of the staircase he found little Rosa, trembling all over.

"Oh, Mynheer John," she said, "what a misfortune!"

"What is it, my child?" asked De Witt.

"They say that they are gone to the Town-hall to fetch the order for Tilly's horse to withdraw."

"You do not say so!" replied John. "Indeed, my dear child, if the dragoons are off, we shall be in a very sad plight."

"I have some advice to give you," Rosa said, trembling even more violently than before.

"Well, let us hear what you have to say, my child. Why should not God speak by your mouth?"

"Now, then, Mynheer John, if I were in your place, I should not go out through the main street."

"And why so, as the dragoons of Tilly are still at their post?"

"Yes, but their order, as long as it is not revoked, enjoins them to stop before the prison."

"Undoubtedly."

"Have you got an order for them to accompany you out of the town?"

"We have not."

"Well, then, in the very moment when you have passed the ranks of the dragoons, you will fall into the hands of the people."

"But the burgher guard?"

"Alas! the burgher guard are the most enraged of all."

"What are we to do then?"

"If I were in your place, Mynheer John," the young girl timidly continued, "I should leave by the postern, which leads into a deserted by-lane, whilst all the people are waiting in the High Street to see you come out by the principal entrance. From there I should try to reach the gate by which you intend to leave the town."

"But my brother is not able to walk," said John.

"I shall try," Cornelius said, with an expression of most sublime fortitude.

"But have you not got your carriage?" asked the girl.

"The carriage is down near the great entrance."

"Not so," she replied. "I considered your coachman to be a faithful man, and I told him to wait for you at the postern."

The two brothers looked first at each other, and then at Rosa, with a glance full of the most tender gratitude.

"The question is now," said the Grand Pensionary, "whether Gryphus will open this door for us."

"Indeed, he will do no such thing," said Rosa.

"Well, and how then?"

"I have foreseen his refusal, and just now, whilst he was talking from the window of the porter's lodge with a dragoon, I took away the key from his bunch."

"And you have got it?"

"Here it is, Mynheer John."

"My child," said Cornelius, "I have nothing to give you in exchange for the service you are rendering us but the Bible which you will find in my room; it is the last gift of an honest man; I hope it will bring you good luck."

"I thank you, Master Cornelius; it shall never leave me," replied Rosa.

And then, with a sigh, she said to herself, "What a pity that I do not know how to read!"

"The shouts and cries are growing louder and louder," said John; "there is not a moment to be lost."

"Come along, gentlemen," said the girl, who now led the two brothers through an inner lobby to the back of the prison. Guided by her, they descended a staircase of about a dozen steps; traversed a small courtyard, which was surrounded by castellated walls; and, the arched door having been opened for them by Rosa, they emerged into a lonely street where their carriage was ready to receive them.

"Quick, quick, my masters! do you hear them?" cried the coachman, in a deadly fright.

Yet, after having made Cornelius get into the carriage first, the Grand Pensionary turned round towards the girl, to whom he said, —

“Good-bye, my child! words could never express our gratitude. God will reward you for having saved the lives of two men.”

Rosa took the hand which John de Witt proffered to her, and kissed it with every show of respect.

“Go! for Heaven’s sake, go!” she said; “it seems they are going to force the gate.”

John de Witt hastily got in, sat himself down by the side of his brother, and, fastening the apron of the carriage, called out to the coachman, —

“To the Tol-Hek!”

The Tol-Hek was the iron gate leading to the harbor of Schevening, in which a small vessel was waiting for the two brothers.

The carriage drove off with the fugitives at the full speed of a pair of spirited Flemish horses. Rosa followed them with her eyes until they turned the corner of the street, upon which, closing the door after her, she went back and threw the key into a cell.

The noise which had made Rosa suppose that the people were forcing the prison door was indeed owing to the mob battering against it after the square had been left by the military.

Solid as the gate was, and although Gryphus, to do him justice, stoutly enough refused to open it, yet evidently it could not resist much longer, and the jailer, growing very pale, put to himself the question whether it would not be better to open the door than to allow it to be forced, when he felt some one gently pulling his coat.

He turned round and saw Rosa.

“Do you hear these madmen?” he said.

“I hear them so well, my father, that in your place —”

“You would open the door?”

“No, I should allow it to be forced.”

"But they will kill me!"

"Yes, if they see you."

"How shall they not see me?"

"Hide yourself."

"Where?"

"In the secret dungeon."

"But you, my child?"

"I shall get into it with you. We shall lock the door, and when they have left the prison, we shall again come forth from our hiding place."

"Zounds, you are right there!" cried Gryphus; "it's surprising how much sense there is in such a little head!"

Then, as the gate began to give way amidst the triumphant shouts of the mob, she opened a little trap-door, and said, —

"Come along, come along, father."

"But our prisoners?"

"God will watch over them, and I shall watch over you."

Gryphus followed his daughter, and the trap-door closed over his head, just as the broken gate gave admittance to the populace.

The dungeon where Rosa had induced her father to hide himself, and where for the present we must leave the two, offered to them a perfectly safe retreat, being known only to those in power, who used to place there important prisoners of state, to guard against a rescue or a revolt.

The people rushed into the prison, with the cry, —

"Death to the traitors! To the gallows with Cornelius de Witt! Death! death!"

CHAPTER IV.

THE MURDERERS.

THE young man with his hat slouched over his eyes, still leaning on the arm of the officer, and still wiping from time to time his brow with his handkerchief, was watching in a corner of the Buytenhof, in the shade of the overhanging weather-board of a closed shop, the doings of the infuriated mob, a spectacle which seemed to draw near its catastrophe.

"Indeed," said he to the officer, "indeed, I think you were right, Van Deken; the order which the deputies have signed is truly the death-warrant of Master Cornelius. Do you hear these people? They certainly bear a sad grudge to the two De Witts."

"In truth," replied the officer, "I never heard such shouts."

"They seem to have found out the cell of the man. Look, look! is not that the window of the cell where Cornelius was locked up?"

A man had seized with both hands and was shaking the iron bars of the window in the room which Cornelius had left only ten minutes before.

"Halloa, halloa!" the man called out, "he is gone."

"How is that? gone?" asked those of the mob who had not been able to get into the prison, crowded as it was with the mass of intruders.

"Gone, gone," repeated the man in a rage, "the bird has flown."

"What does this man say?" asked his Highness, growing quite pale.

"Oh, Monseigneur, he says a thing which would be very fortunate if it should turn out true!"

"Certainly it would be fortunate if it were true," said the young man; "unfortunately it cannot be true."

"However, look!" said the officer.

And indeed, some more faces, furious and contorted with rage, showed themselves at the windows, crying, —

"Escaped, gone, they have helped them off!"

And the people in the street repeated, with fearful imprecations, —

"Escaped! gone! After them, and catch them!"

"Monseigneur, it seems that Mynheer Cornelius has really escaped," said the officer.

"Yes, from prison, perhaps, but not from the town; you will see, Van Deken, that the poor fellow will find the gate closed against him which he hoped to find open."

"Has an order been given to close the town gates, Monseigneur?"

"No,—at least I do not think so; who could have given such an order?"

"Indeed, but what makes your Highness suppose?"

"There are fatalities," Monseigneur replied, in an off-hand manner; "and the greatest men have sometimes fallen victims to such fatalities."

At these words the officer felt his blood run cold, as somehow or other he was convinced that the prisoner was lost.

At this moment the roar of the multitude broke forth like thunder, for it was now quite certain that Cornelius de Witt was no longer in the prison.

Cornelius and John, after driving along the pond, had taken the main street which leads to the Tol-Hek, giving directions to the coachman to slacken his pace, in order not to excite any suspicion.

But when, on having proceeded half-way down that street, the man felt that he had left the prison and death behind, *and before him there was life and liberty, he neglected every precaution, and set his horses off at a gallop.*

All at once he stopped.

"What is the matter?" asked John, putting his head out of the coach window.

"Oh, my masters!" cried the coachman, "it is —"

Terror choked the voice of the honest fellow.

"Well, say what you have to say!" urged the Grand Pensionary.

"The gate is closed, that's what it is."

"How is this? It is not usual to close the gate by day."

"Just look!"

John de Witt leaned out of the window, and indeed saw that the man was right.

"Never mind, but drive on," said John; "I have with me the order for the commutation of the punishment, the gatekeeper will let us through."

The carriage moved along, but it was evident that the driver was no longer urging his horses with the same degree of confidence.

Moreover, as John de Witt put his head out of the carriage window, he was seen and recognised by a brewer, who, being behind his companions, was just shutting his door in all haste to join them at the Buytenhof. He uttered a cry of surprise, and ran after two other men before him, whom he overtook about a hundred yards farther on, and told them what he had seen. The three men then stopped, looking after the carriage, being however not yet quite sure as to whom it contained.

The carriage in the mean while arrived at the Tol-Hek.

"Open!" cried the coachman.

"Open!" echoed the gatekeeper, from the threshold of his lodge; "it's all very well to say, 'Open!' but what am I to do it with?"

"With the key, to be sure!" said the coachman.

"With the key! Oh, yes! but if you have not got it?"

"How is that? Have not you got the key?" asked the coachman.

"No, I have n't."

"What has become of it?"

"Well, they have taken it from me."

"Who?"

"Some one, I dare say, who had a mind that no one should leave the town."

"My good man," said the Grand Pensionary, putting out his head from the window, and risking all for gaining all; "my good man, it is for me, John de Witt, and for my brother Cornelius, who I am taking away into exile."

"Oh, Mynheer de Witt! I am indeed very much grieved," said the gatekeeper, rushing towards the carriage; "but, upon my sacred word, the key has been taken from me."

"When?"

"This morning."

"By whom?"

"By a pale and thin young man, of about twenty-two."

"And wherefore did you give it up to him?"

"Because he showed me an order, signed and sealed."

"By whom?"

"By the gentlemen of the Town-hall."

"Well, then," said Cornelius calmly, "our doom seems to be fixed."

"Do you know whether the same precaution has been taken at the other gates?"

"I do not."

"Now then," said John to the coachman, "God commands man to do all that is in his power to preserve his life; go, and drive to another gate."

And whilst the servant was turning round the vehicle the Grand Pensionary said to the gatekeeper, —

"Take our thanks for your good intentions; the will must count for the deed; you had the will to save us, and that, in the eyes of the Lord, is as if you had succeeded in doing so."

"Alas!" said the gatekeeper, "do you see down there?"

"Drive at a gallop through that group," John called out

to the coachman, "and take the street on the left; it is our only chance."

The group which John alluded to had, for its nucleus, those three men whom we left looking after the carriage, and who, in the meanwhile, had been joined by seven or eight others.

These new-comers evidently meant mischief with regard to the carriage.

When they saw the horses galloping down upon them, they placed themselves across the street, brandishing cudgels in their hands, and calling out, —

"Stop! stop!"

The coachman, on his side, lashed his horses into increased speed, until the coach and the men encountered.

The brothers De Witt, enclosed within the body of the carriage, were not able to see anything; but they felt a severe shock, occasioned by the rearing of the horses. The whole vehicle for a moment shook and stopped; but immediately after, passing over something round and elastic, which seemed to be the body of a prostrate man, set off again amidst a volley of the fiercest oaths.

"Alas!" said Cornelius, "I am afraid we have hurt some one."

"Gallop! gallop!" called John.

But, notwithstanding this order, the coachman suddenly came to a stop.

"Now, then, what is the matter again?" asked John.

"Look there!" said the coachman.

John looked. The whole mass of the populace from the Buytenhof appeared at the extremity of the street along which the carriage was to proceed, and its stream moved roaring and rapid, as if lashed on by a hurricane.

"Stop and get off," said John to the coachman; "it is useless to go any farther; we are lost!"

"Here they are! here they are!" five hundred voices were crying at the same time.

"Yes, here they are, the traitors, the murderers, the

assassins!" answered the men who were running after the carriage to the people who were coming to meet it. The former carried in their arms the bruised body of one of their companions, who, trying to seize the reins of the horses, had been trodden down by them.

This was the object over which the two brothers had felt their carriage pass.

The coachman stopped, but, however strongly his master urged him, he refused to get off and save himself.

In an instant the carriage was hemmed in between those who followed and those who met it. It rose above the mass of moving heads like a floating island. But in another instant it came to a dead stop. A blacksmith had with his hammer struck down one of the horses, which fell in the traces.

At this moment, the shutter of a window opened, and disclosed the sallow face and the dark eyes of the young man, who with intense interest watched the scene which was preparing. Behind him appeared the head of the officer, almost as pale as himself.

"Good heavens, Monseigneur, what is going on there?" whispered the officer.

"Something very terrible, to a certainty," replied the other.

"Don't you see, Monseigneur, they are dragging the Grand Pensionary from the carriage, they strike him, they tear him to pieces."

"Indeed, these people must certainly be prompted by a most violent indignation," said the young man, with the same impassible tone which he had preserved all along.

"And here is Cornelius, whom they now likewise drag out of the carriage, — Cornelius, who is already quite broken and mangled by the torture. Only look, look!"

"Indeed, it is Cornelius, and no mistake."

The officer uttered a feeble cry, and turned his head away; the brother of the Grand Pensionary, before having set foot on the ground, whilst still on the bottom step of

the carriage, was struck down with an iron bar which broke his skull. He rose once more, but immediately fell again.

Some fellows then seized him by the feet, and dragged him into the crowd, into the middle of which one might have followed his bloody track, and he was soon closed in among the savage yells of malignant exultation.

The young man — a thing which would have been thought impossible — grew even paler than before, and his eyes were for a moment veiled behind the lids.

The officer saw this sign of compassion, and, wishing to avail himself of this softened tone of his feelings, continued, —

“Come, come, Monseigneur, for here they are also going to murder the Grand Pensionary.”

But the young man had already opened his eyes again.

“To be sure,” he said. “These people are really implacable. It does no one good to offend them.”

“Monseigneur,” said the officer, “may not one save this poor man, who has been your Highness’s instructor? If there be any means name it, and if I should perish in the attempt —”

William of Orange — for he it was — knit his brows in a very forbidding manner, restrained the glance of gloomy malice which glistened in his half-closed eye, and answered, —

“Captain Van Deken, I request you to go and look after my troops, that they may be armed for any emergency.”

“But am I to leave your Highness here, alone, in the presence of all these murderers?”

“Go, and don’t you trouble yourself about me more than I do myself,” the Prince gruffly replied.

The officer started off with a speed which was much less owing to his sense of military obedience than to his pleasure at being relieved from the necessity of witnessing the shocking spectacle of the murder of the other brother.

He had scarcely left the room, when John — who, with an almost superhuman effort, had reached the stone steps

of a house nearly opposite that where his former pupil concealed himself—began to stagger under the blows which were inflicted on him from all sides, calling out,—

“My brother! where is my brother?”

One of the ruffians knocked off his hat with a blow of his clenched fist.

Another showed to him his bloody hands; for this fellow had ripped open Cornelius and disembowelled him, and was now hastening to the spot in order not to lose the opportunity of serving the Grand Pensionary in the same manner, whilst they were dragging the dead body of Cornelius to the gibbet.

John uttered a cry of agony and grief, and put one of his hands before his eyes.

“Oh, you close your eyes, do you?” said one of the soldiers of the burgher guard; “well, I shall open them for you.”

And saying this, he stabbed him with his pike in the face, and the blood spurted forth.

“My brother!” cried John de Witt, trying to see, through the stream of blood which blinded him, what had become of Cornelius; “my brother, my brother!”

“Go and run after him!” bellowed another murderer, putting his musket to his temples and pulling the trigger.

But the gun did not go off.

The fellow then turned his musket round, and, taking it by the barrel with both hands, struck John de Witt down with the butt-end. John staggered and fell down at his feet, but, raising himself with a last effort, he once more called out,—

“My brother!” with a voice so full of anguish, that the young man opposite closed the shutter.

There remained little more to see; a third murderer fired a pistol with the muzzle to his face; and this time the shot took effect, blowing out his brains. John de Witt fell to rise no more.

On this, every one of the miscreants, emboldened by his

fall, wanted to fire his gun at him, or strike him with blows of the sledge-hammer, or stab him with a knife or swords, every one wanted to draw a drop of blood from the fallen hero, and tear off a shred from his garments.

And after having mangled, and torn, and completely stripped the two brothers, the mob dragged their naked and bloody bodies to an extemporised gibbet, where amateur executioners hung them up by the feet.

Then came the most dastardly scoundrels of all, who, not having dared to strike the living flesh, cut the dead in pieces, and then went about the town selling small slices of the bodies of John and Cornelius at ten sous a piece.

We cannot take upon ourselves to say whether, through the almost imperceptible chink of the shutter, the young man witnessed the conclusion of this shocking scene; but at the very moment when they were hanging the two martyrs on the gibbet he passed through the terrible mob, which was too much absorbed in the task, so grateful to its taste, to take any notice of him; and thus he reached unobserved the Tol-Hek, which was still closed.

"Ah! sir," said the gatekeeper, "do you bring me the key?"

"Yes, my man, here it is."

"It is most unfortunate that you did not bring me that key only one quarter of an hour sooner," said the gatekeeper with a sigh.

"And why that?" asked the other.

"Because I might have opened the gate to Mynheers de Witt; whereas, finding the gate locked, they were obliged to retrace their steps."

"Gate! gate!" cried a voice which seemed to be that of a man in a hurry.

The Prince, turning round, observed Captain Van Deken.

"Is that you, Captain?" he said. "You are not yet out of the Hague? This is executing my orders very slowly."

"Monseigneur," replied the Captain, "this is the third

gate at which I have presented myself; the other two were closed."

"Well, this good man will open this one for you; do it, my friend."

The last words were addressed to the gatekeeper, who stood quite thunderstruck on hearing Captain Van Deken addressing by the title of Monseigneur this pale young man, to whom he himself had spoken in such a familiar way.

As it were to make up for his fault, he hastened to open the gate, which swung creaking on its hinges.

"Will Monseigneur avail himself of my horse?" asked the Captain.

"I thank you, Captain, I shall use my own steed, which is waiting for me close at hand."

And, taking from his pocket a golden whistle, such as was generally used at that time for summoning the servants, he sounded it with a shrill and prolonged call, on which an equerry on horseback speedily made his appearance, leading another horse by the bridle.

William, without touching the stirrup, vaulted into the saddle of the led horse, and, setting his spurs into its flanks, started off for the Leyden road. Having reached it, he turned round and beckoned to the Captain, who was far behind, to ride by his side.

"Do you know," he then said, without stopping, "that those rascals have killed John de Witt as well as his brother?"

"Alas! Monseigneur," the Captain answered sadly, "I should like it much better if these two difficulties were still in your Highness's way of becoming *de facto* Stadtholder of Holland."

"Certainly, it would have been better," said William, "if what did happen had not happened. But it cannot be helped now, and we have had nothing to do with it. Let us push on, Captain, that we may arrive at Alphen before the message which the States-General are sure to send to me to the camp."

The Captain bowed, allowed the Prince to ride ahead, and, for the remainder of the journey, kept at the same respectful distance as he had done before his Highness called him to his side.

“How I should wish,” William of Orange malignantly muttered to himself, with a dark frown and setting the spurs to his horse, “to see the figure which Louis will cut when he is apprised of the manner in which his dear friends De Witt have been served! Oh thou Sun! thou Sun! as truly as I am called William the Silent, thou Sun, thou hadst best look to thy rays!”

And the young Prince, the relentless rival of the Great King, sped away upon his fiery steed, — this future Stadtholder, who had been but the day before very uncertainly established in his new power, but for whom the burghers of the Hague had built a staircase with the bodies of John and Cornelius, two princes as noble as he in the eyes of God and man.

CHAPTER V.

THE TULIP-FANCIER AND HIS NEIGHBOUR.

WHILST the burghers of the Hague were tearing in pieces the bodies of John and Cornelius de Witt, and whilst William of Orange, after having made sure that his two antagonists were really dead, was galloping over the Leyden road, followed by Captain van Deken, whom he found a little too compassionate to honour him any longer with his confidence, Craeke, the faithful servant, mounted on a good horse, and little suspecting what terrible events had taken place since his departure, proceeded along the high road lined with trees, until he was clear of the town and the neighbouring villages.

Being once safe, he left his horse at a livery stable in order not to arouse suspicion, and tranquilly continued his journey on the canal-boats, which conveyed him by easy stages to Dort, pursuing their way under skilful guidance by the shortest possible routes through the windings of the river, which held in its watery embrace so many enchanting little islands, edged with willows and rushes, and abounding in luxurious vegetation, whereon flocks of fat sheep browsed in peaceful sleepiness. Craeke from afar off recognised Dort, the smiling city, at the foot of a hill dotted with windmills. He saw the fine red brick houses, mortared in white lines, standing on the edge of the water, and their balconies, open towards the river, decked out with silk tapestry embroidered with gold flowers, the wonderful manufacture of India and China; and, near these brilliant stuffs, large lines set to catch the voracious eels, which are attracted towards the houses

by the garbage thrown every day from the kitchens into the river.

Craeke, standing on the deck of the boat, saw, across the moving sails of the windmills, on the slope of the hill, the red and pink house which was the goal of his errand. The outlines of its roof were merging in the yellow foliage of a curtain of poplar trees, the whole habitation having for background a dark grove of gigantic elms. The mansion was situated in such a way that the sun, falling on it as into a funnel, dried up, warmed, and fertilised the mist which the verdant screen could not prevent the river wind from carrying there every morning and evening.

Having disembarked unobserved amid the usual bustle of the city, Craeke at once directed his steps towards the house which we have just described, and which—white, trim, and tidy, even more cleanly scoured and more carefully waxed in the hidden corners than in the places which were exposed to view—enclosed a truly happy mortal.

This happy mortal, *rara avis*, was Dr. van Baerle, the godson of Cornelius de Witt. He had inhabited the same house ever since his childhood; for it was the house in which his father and grandfather, old established princely merchants of the princely city of Dort, were born.

Mynheer van Baerle the father had amassed in the Indian trade three or four hundred thousand guilders, which Mynheer van Baerle the son, at the death of his dear and worthy parents, found still quite new, although one set of them bore the date of coinage of 1640, and the other that of 1610, a fact which proved that they were guilders of Van Baerle the father and of Van Baerle the grandfather; but we will inform the reader at once that these three or four hundred thousand guilders were only the pocket money, or sort of purse, for Cornelius van Baerle, the hero of this story, as his landed property in the province yielded him an income of about ten thousand guilders a year.

When the worthy citizen, the father of Cornelius, passed

from time into eternity, three months after having buried his wife, who seemed to have departed first to smooth for him the path of death as she had smoothed for him the path of life, he said to his son, as he embraced him for the last time, —

“Eat, drink, and spend your money, if you wish to know what life really is; for as to toiling from morn to evening on a wooden stool, or a leathern chair, in a counting-house or a laboratory, that certainly is not living. Your time to die will also come; and if you are not then so fortunate as to have a son, you will let my name grow extinct, and my guilders, which no one has ever fingered but my father, myself, and the coiner, will have the surprise of passing to an unknown master. And least of all, imitate the example of your godfather, Cornelius de Witt, who has plunged into politics, the most ungrateful of all careers, and who will certainly come to an untimely end.”

Having given utterance to this paternal advice, the worthy Mynheer van Baerle died, to the intense grief of his son Cornelius, who cared very little for the guilders, and very much for his father.

Cornelius then remained alone in his large house. In vain his godfather offered to him a place in the public service, — in vain did he try to give him a taste for glory, — although Cornelius, to gratify his godfather, did embark with De Ruyter upon “The Seven Provinces,” the flagship of a fleet of one hundred and thirty-nine sail, with which the famous admiral set out to contend single-handed against the combined forces of France and England. When, guided by the pilot Léger, he had come within musket-shot of the “Prince,” with the Duke of York (the English king’s brother) aboard, upon which De Ruyter, his mentor, made so sharp and well directed an attack that the Duke, perceiving that his vessel would soon have to strike, made the best of his way aboard the “Saint Michael”; when he had seen the “Saint Michael,” riddled and shattered by the Dutch broadside, drift out of the line; when he had wit-

nessed the sinking of the "Earl of Sandwich," and the death by fire or drowning of four hundred sailors; when he realized that the result of all this destruction — after twenty ships had been blown to pieces, three thousand men killed and five thousand injured — was that nothing was decided, that both sides claimed the victory, that the fighting would soon begin again, and that just one more name, that of Southwold Bay, had been added to the list of battles; when he had estimated how much time is lost simply in shutting his eyes and ears by a man who likes to use his reflective powers even while his fellow creatures are cannonading one another; — Cornelius bade farewell to De Ruyter, to the Ruart de Pulten, and to glory, kissed the knees of the Grand Pensionary, for whom he entertained the deepest veneration, and retired to his house at Dort, rich in his well-earned repose, his twenty-eight years, an iron constitution and keen perceptions, and his capital of more than four hundred thousands of florins and income of ten thousand, convinced that a man is always endowed by Heaven with too much for his own happiness, and just enough to make him miserable.

Consequently, and to indulge his own idea of happiness, Cornelius began to be interested in the study of plants and insects, collected and classified the Flora of all the Dutch islands, arranged the whole entomology of the province, on which he wrote a treatise, with plates drawn by his own hands; and at last, being at a loss what to do with his time, and especially with his money, which went on accumulating at a most alarming rate, he took it into his head to select for himself, from all the follies of his country and of his age, one of the most elegant and expensive, — he became a tulip-fancier.

It was the time when the Dutch and the Portuguese, rivalling each other in this branch of horticulture, had begun to worship that flower, and to make more of a cult of it than ever naturalists dared to make of the human race for fear of arousing the jealousy of God.

Soon people from Dort to Mons began to talk of Mynheer van Baerle's tulips; and his beda, pita, drying-rooms, and drawers of bulbs were visited, as the galleries and libraries of Alexandria were by illustrious Roman travellers.

Van Baerle began by expending his yearly revenue in laying the groundwork of his collection, after which he broke in upon his new guilders to bring it to perfection. His exertions, indeed, were crowned with a most magnificent result: he produced three new tulips, which he called the "Jane," after his mother; the "Van Baerle," after his father; and the "Cornelius," after his godfather; the other names have escaped us, but the fanciers will be sure to find them in the catalogues of the times.

In the beginning of the year 1672, Cornelius de Witt came to Dort for three months, to live at his old family mansion; for not only was he born in that city, but his family had been resident there for centuries.

Cornelius, at that period, as William of Orange said, began to enjoy the most perfect unpopularity. To his fellow citizens, the good burghers of Dort, however, he did not appear in the light of a criminal who deserved to be hung. It is true, they did not particularly like his somewhat austere republicanism, but they were proud of his valour; and when he made his entrance into their town, the cup of honour was offered to him, readily enough, in the name of the city.

After having thanked his fellow citizens, Cornelius proceeded to his old paternal house, and gave directions for some repairs, which he wished to have executed before the arrival of his wife and children; and thence he wended his way to the house of his godson, who perhaps was the only person in Dort as yet unacquainted with the presence of Cornelius in the town.

In the same degree as Cornelius de Witt had excited the hatred of the people by sowing those evil seeds which are called political passions, Van Baerle had gained the affections of his fellow citizens by completely shunning the

pursuit of politics, absorbed as he was in the peaceful pursuit of cultivating tulips.

Van Baerle was truly beloved by his servants and labourers; nor had he any conception that there was in this world a man who wished ill to another.

And yet it must be said, to the disgrace of mankind, that Cornelius van Baerle, without being aware of the fact, had a much more ferocious, fierce, and implacable enemy than the Grand Pensionary and his brother had among the Orange party, who were most hostile to the devoted brothers, who had never been sundered by the least misunderstanding during their lives, and by their mutual devotion in the face of death made sure the existence of their brotherly affection beyond the grave.

At the time when Cornelius van Baerle began to devote himself to tulip-growing, expending on this hobby his yearly revenue and the guilders of his father, there was at Dort, living next door to him, a citizen of the name of Isaac Boxtel who from the age when he was able to think for himself had indulged the same fancy, and who was in ecstasies at the mere mention of the word "tulban," which (as we are assured by the "*Floriste Française*," the most highly considered authority in matters relating to this flower) is the first word in the Cingalese tongue which was ever used to designate that masterpiece of floriculture which is now called the tulip.

Boxtel had not the good fortune of being rich, like Van Baerle. He had therefore, with great care and patience, and by dint of strenuous exertions, laid out near his house at Dort a garden fit for the culture of his cherished flower; he had mixed the soil according to the most approved prescriptions, and given to his hotbeds just as much heat and fresh air as the strictest rules of horticulture exact.

Isaac knew the temperature of his frames to the twentieth part of a degree. He knew the strength of the current of air, and tempered it so as to adapt it to the wave of the stems of his flowers. His productions also began to meet

with the favour of the public. They were beautiful, nay, distinguished. Several fanciers had come to see Boxtel's tulips. At last he had even started amongst all the Linnaeuses and Tourneforts a tulip which bore his name, and which, after having travelled all through France, had found its way into Spain, and penetrated as far as Portugal; and the King, Don Alfonso VI.—who, being expelled from Lisbon, had retired to the island of Terceira, where he amused himself, not, like the great Condé, with watering his carnations, but with growing tulips—had, on seeing the Boxtel tulip, exclaimed, “Not so bad, by any means!”

All at once, Cornelius van Baerle, who, after all his learned pursuits, had been seized with the tulipomania, made some changes in his house at Dort, which, as we have stated, was next door to that of Boxtel. He raised a certain building in his court-yard by a story, which, shutting out the sun, took half a degree of warmth from Boxtel's garden, and, on the other hand, added half a degree of cold in winter; not to mention that it cut the wind, and disturbed all the horticultural calculations and arrangements of his neighbour.

After all, this mishap appeared to Boxtel of no great consequence. Van Baerle was but a painter, a sort of fool who tried to reproduce and disfigure on canvas the wonders of nature. The painter, he thought, had raised his studio by a story to get better light, and thus far he had only been in the right. Mynheer van Baerle was a painter, as Mynheer Boxtel was a tulip-grower; he wanted somewhat more sun for his paintings, and he took half a degree from his neighbour's tulips.

The law was for Van Baerle, and Boxtel had to abide by it.

Besides, Isaac had made the discovery that too much sun was injurious to tulips, and that this flower grew quicker, and had a better colouring, with the temperate warmth of morning, than with the powerful heat of the midday sun. He therefore felt almost grateful to Cornelius Van Baerle for having given him a screen gratis.

Maybe this was not quite in accordance with the true state of things in general, and of Isaac Boxtel's feelings in particular. It is certainly astonishing what rich comfort great minds, in the midst of momentous catastrophes, will derive from the consolations of philosophy.

But, alas! what was the agony of the unfortunate Boxtel on seeing the windows of the new story set out with bulbs and seedlings of tulips for the border, and tulips in pots; in short, with everything pertaining to the pursuits of a tulip-monomaniac!

There were bundles of labels, cupboards, and drawers with compartments, and wire guards for the cupboards, to allow free access to the air whilst keeping out slugs, mice, dormice, and rats, all of them very curious fanciers of tulips at two thousand francs a bulb.

Boxtel was quite amazed when he saw all this apparatus, but he was not as yet aware of the full extent of his misfortune. Van Baerle was known to be fond of everything that pleases the eye. He studied Nature in all her aspects for the benefit of his paintings, which were as minutely finished as those of Gérard Dow, his master, and of Miéris, his friend. Was it not possible, that, having to paint the interior of a tulip-grower's, he had collected in his new studio all the accessories of decoration?

Yet, although thus consoling himself with illusory suppositions, Boxtel was not able to resist the burning curiosity which was devouring him. In the evening, therefore, he placed a ladder against the partition wall between their gardens, and, looking into that of his neighbour Van Baerle, he convinced himself that the soil of a large square bed, which had formerly been occupied by different plants, was removed, and the ground disposed in beds of loam mixed with river mud (a combination which is particularly favourable to the tulip), and the whole surrounded by a border of turf to keep the soil in its place. Besides this, sufficient shade to temper the noonday heat; aspect south-southwest; water in abundant supply, and at hand; in short, every

requirement to insure not only success but also progress. There could not be a doubt that Van Baerle had become a tulip-grower.

Boxtel at once pictured to himself this learned man, with a capital of four hundred thousand and a yearly income of ten thousand guilders, devoting all his intellectual and financial resources to the cultivation of the tulip. He foresaw his neighbour's success, and he felt such a pang at the mere idea of this success that his hands dropped powerless, his knees trembled, and he fell in despair from the ladder.

And thus it was not for the sake of painted tulips, but for real ones, that Van Baerle took from him half a degree of warmth. And thus Van Baerle was to have the most admirably fitted aspect, and, besides, a large, airy, and well ventilated chamber where to preserve his bulbs and seedlings; while he, Boxtel, had been obliged to give up for this purpose his bedroom, and, lest his sleeping in the same apartment might injure his bulbs and seedlings, had taken up his abode in a miserable garret.

Boxtel, then, was to have next door to him a rival and successful competitor; and his rival, instead of being some unknown, obscure gardener, was the godson of Mynheer Cornelius de Witt, that is to say, a celebrity.

Boxtel, as the reader may see, was not possessed of the spirit of Porus, who, on being conquered by Alexander, consoled himself with the celebrity of his conqueror.

And now if Van Baerle produced a new tulip, and named it the John de Witt, after having named one the Cornelius? It was indeed enough to choke one with rage.

Thus Boxtel, with jealous foreboding, became the prophet of his own misfortune. And, after having made this melancholy discovery, he passed the most wretched night imaginable.

CHAPTER VI.

THE HATRED OF A TULIP-FANCIER.

FROM that moment Boxtel's interest in tulips was no longer a stimulus to his exertions, but a deadening anxiety. Henceforth all his thoughts ran only upon the injury which his neighbour would cause him, and thus his favourite occupation was changed into a constant source of misery to him.

Van Baerle, as may easily be imagined, had no sooner begun to apply his natural ingenuity to his new fancy, than he succeeded in growing the finest tulips. Indeed, he knew better than any one else at Haarlem or Leyden — the two towns which boast the best soil and the most congenial climate — how to vary the colours, to modify the shape, and to produce new species.

He belonged to that natural, humorous school who took for their motto in the seventeenth century the aphorism uttered by one of their number in 1653, — "To despise flowers is to offend God."

From that premise the school of tulip-fanciers, the most exclusive of all schools, worked out the following syllogism in the same year: —

"To despise flowers is to offend God.

"The more beautiful the flower is, the more does one offend God in despising it.

"The tulip is the most beautiful of all flowers.

"Therefore, he who despises the tulip offends God beyond measure."

By reasoning of this kind, it can be seen that the four or five thousand tulip-growers of Holland, France, and Portu-

gal, leaving out those of Ceylon and China and the Indies, might, if so disposed, put the whole world under the ban, and condemn as schismatics and heretics and deserving of death the several hundred millions of mankind whose hopes of salvation were not centred upon the tulip.

We cannot doubt that in such a cause Boxtel, though he was Van Baerle's deadly foe, would have marched under the same banner with him.

Mynheer van Baerle and his tulips, therefore, were in the mouth of everybody; so much so, that Boxtel's name disappeared for ever from the list of the notable tulip-growers in Holland, and those of Dort were now represented by Cornelius van Baerle, the modest and inoffensive savant.

Engaging, heart and soul, in his pursuits of sowing, planting, and gathering, Van Baerle, caressed by the whole fraternity of tulip-growers in Europe, entertained not the least suspicion that there was at his very door a pretender whose throne he had usurped.

He went on in his career, and consequently in his triumphs; and in the course of two years he covered his borders with such marvellous productions as no mortal man, following in the tracks of the Creator, except perhaps Shakespeare and Rubens, have equalled in point of numbers.

And also, if Dante had wished for a new type to be added to his characters of the Inferno, he might have chosen Boxtel during the period of Van Baerle's successes. Whilst Cornelius was weeding, manuring, watering his beds, whilst, kneeling on the turf border, he analysed every vein of the flowering tulips, and meditated on the modifications which might be affected by crosses of colour or otherwise, Boxtel, concealed behind a small sycamore which he had trained at the top of the partition wall in the shape of a fan, watched, with his eyes starting from their sockets and with foaming mouth, every step and every gesture of his neighbour; and whenever he thought he saw him look happy, or descried a smile on his lips, or a flash of

contentment glistening in his eyes, he poured out towards him such a volley of maledictions and furious threats as to make it indeed a matter of wonder that this venomous breath of envy and hatred did not carry a blight on the innocent flowers which had excited it.

When the evil spirit has once taken hold of the heart of man, it urges him on, without letting him stop. Thus Boxtel soon was no longer content with seeing Van Baerle. He wanted to see his flowers, too; he had the feelings of an artist; the master-piece of a rival engrossed his interest.

He therefore bought a telescope, which enabled him to watch as accurately as did the owner himself every progressive development of the flower, from the moment when, in the first year, its pale seed-leaf begins to peep from the ground, to that glorious one, when, after five years, its petals at last reveal the hidden treasures of its chalice. How often had the miserable, jealous man to observe in Van Baerle's beds tulips which dazzled him by their beauty, and almost choked him by their perfection!

And then, after the first blush of the admiration which he could not help feeling, he began to be tortured by the pangs of envy, by that slow fever which creeps over the heart and changes it into a nest of vipers, each devouring the other and ever born anew. How often did Boxtel, in the midst of tortures which no pen is able fully to describe, — how often did he feel an inclination to jump down into the garden during the night, to destroy the plants, to tear the bulbs with his teeth, and to sacrifice to his wrath the owner himself, if he should venture to stand up for the defence of his tulips!

But to kill a tulip was a horrible crime in the eyes of a genuine tulip-fancier; as to killing a man, it would not have mattered so very much.

Yet Van Baerle made such progress in the noble science of growing tulips, which he seemed to master with the true instinct of genius, that Boxtel at last was maddened to such

a degree as to think of throwing stones and sticks into the flower-stands of his neighbour. But, remembering that he would be sure to be found out, and that he would not only be punished by law, but also dishonoured for ever in the face of all the tulip-growers of Europe, he had recourse to stratagem, and, to gratify his hatred, tried to devise a plan by means of which he might gain his ends without being compromised himself.

He considered a long time, and at last his meditations were crowned with success.

One evening he tied two cats together by their hind legs with a string about six feet in length, and threw them from the wall into the midst of that noble, that princely, that royal bed, which contained not only the "Cornelius de Witt," but also the "Beauty of Brabant," milk-white, edged with purple and pink, the "Marble of Rotterdam," colour of flax, blossoms feathered red and flesh colour, the "Wonder of Haarlem," the "Colombin obscur," and the "Colombin clair terni."

The frightened cats, having alighted on the ground, first tried to fly each in a different direction, until the string by which they were tied together was tightly stretched across the bed; then, however, feeling that they were not able to get off, they began to pull to and fro, and to wheel about with hideous caterwaulings, mowing down with their string the flowers among which they were struggling, until, after a furious strife of about a quarter of an hour, the string broke and the combatants vanished.

Boxtel, hidden behind his sycamore, could not see anything, as it was pitch-dark; but the piercing cries of the cats told the whole tale, and his heart overflowing with gall now throbbed with triumphant joy.

Boxtel was so eager to ascertain the extent of the injury, that he remained at his post until morning to feast his eyes on the sad state in which the two cats had left the flower-beds of his neighbour. The mists of the morning chilled his frame, but he did not feel the cold, the hope of revenge

keeping his blood at fever heat. The chagrin of his rival was to pay for all the inconvenience which he incurred himself.

At the earliest dawn the door of the white house opened, and Van Baerle made his appearance, approaching the flower-beds with the smile of a man who has passed the night comfortably in his bed, and has had happy dreams.

All at once he perceived furrows and little mounds of earth on the beds which only the evening before had been as smooth as a mirror; all at once he perceived the symmetrical rows of his tulips to be completely disordered, like the pikes of a battalion in the midst of which a shell has fallen.

He ran up to them with blanched cheek.

Boxtel trembled with joy. Fifteen or twenty tulips, torn and crushed, were lying about, some of them bent, others completely broken and already withering, the sap oozing from their bleeding bulbs: how gladly would Van Baerle have redeemed that precious sap with his own blood!

But what were his surprise and his delight! what was the disappointment of his rival! Not one of the four tulips which the latter had meant to destroy was injured at all. They raised proudly their noble heads above the corpses of their slain companions. This was enough to console Van Baerle, and enough to fan the rage of the horticultural murderer, who tore his hair at the sight of the effects of the crime which he had committed in vain.

Van Baerle could not imagine the cause of the mishap, which, fortunately, was of far less consequence than it might have been. On making inquiries, he learned that the whole night had been disturbed by terrible caterwaulings. He besides found traces of the cats, their footmarks and hairs left behind on the battle-field; to guard, therefore, in future against a similar outrage, he gave orders that henceforth one of the under gardeners should sleep in the garden in a sentry-box near the flower-beds.

Boxtel heard him give the order, and saw the sentry-box

put up that very day ; but he deemed himself lucky in not having been suspected, and, being more than ever incensed against the successful horticulturist, he resolved to bide his time.

Just then the Tulip Society of Haarlem offered a prize for the discovery (we dare not say the manufacture) of a large black tulip without a spot of colour, a thing which had not yet been accomplished, and was considered impossible, as at that time there did not exist a flower of that species approaching even to a dark nut-brown. It was, therefore, generally said that the founders of the prize might just as well have offered two millions as a hundred thousand guilders, since no one would be able to gain it.

The tulip-growing world, however, was thrown by it into a state of most active commotion. Some fanciers caught at the idea without believing it practicable ; but such is the power of imagination among florists, that, although considering the undertaking as certain to fail, all their thoughts were engrossed by that great black tulip, which was looked upon to be as chimerical as the black swan of Horace or the white raven of French tradition.

Van Baerle was one of the tulip-growers who were struck with the idea ; Boxel thought of it in the light of a speculation. Van Baerle, as soon as the idea had once taken root in his clear and ingenious mind, began slowly the necessary planting and cross-breeding to reduce the tulips which he had grown already from red to brown, and from brown to dark brown.

By the next year he had obtained flowers of a perfect nut-brown, and Boxel espied them in the border, whereas he had himself as yet only succeeded in producing the light brown.

It might perhaps be interesting to explain to the gentle reader the beautiful chain of theories which go to prove that the tulip borrows its colors from the elements ; perhaps we should give him pleasure if we were to maintain and establish that nothing is impossible for a florist who avails

himself with judgment and discretion and patience of the sun's heat, the clear water, the juices of the earth, and the cool breezes. But this is not a treatise upon tulips in general; it is the story of one particular tulip which we have undertaken to write, and to that we limit ourselves, however alluring the subject which is so closely allied to ours.

Boxtel, once more worsted by the superiority of his hated rival, was now completely disgusted with tulip-growing, and, being driven half mad, devoted himself entirely to observation.

The house of his rival was quite open to view; a garden exposed to the sun; cabinets with glass walls, shelves, cupboards, boxes, and ticketed pigeon-holes, which could easily be surveyed by the telescope. Boxtel allowed his bulbs to rot in the pits, his seedlings to dry up in their cases, and his tulips to wither in the borders, and henceforward occupied himself with nothing else but the doings at Van Baerle's. He breathed through the stalks of Van Baerle's tulips, quenched his thirst with the water he sprinkled upon them, and feasted on the fine soft earth which his neighbour scattered upon his cherished bulbs.

But the most curious part of the operations was not performed in the garden.

It might be one o'clock in the morning when Van Baerle went up to his laboratory, into the glazed cabinet whither Boxtel's telescope had such an easy access; and here, as soon as the lamp illuminated the walls and windows, Boxtel saw the inventive genius of his rival at work.

He beheld him sifting his seeds, and soaking them in liquids which were destined to modify or to deepen their colours. He knew what Cornelius meant when heating certain grains, then moistening them, then combining them with others by a sort of grafting, — a minute and marvelously delicate manipulation, — and when he shut up in darkness those which were expected to furnish the black colour, exposed to the sun or to the lamp those which were to produce red, and placed between the endless reflections of two

water-mirrors those intended for white, the pure representation of the limpid element.

This innocent magic, the fruit at the same time of child-like musings and of manly genius — this patient untiring labour, of which Boxtel knew himself to be incapable — made him, gnawed as he was with envy, centre all his life, all his thoughts, and all his hopes in his telescope,

For, strange to say, the love and interest of horticulture had not deadened in Isaac his fierce envy and thirst of revenge. Sometimes, whilst covering Van Baerle with his telescope, he deluded himself into a belief that he was levelling a never-failing musket at him; and then he would seek with his finger for the trigger to fire the shot which was to have killed his neighbour. But it is time that we should connect with this epoch of the operations of the one, and the espionage of the other, the visit which Cornelius de Witt came to pay to his native town.

CHAPTER VII.

THE HAPPY MAN MAKES ACQUAINTANCE WITH MISFORTUNE.

CORNELIUS DE WITT, after having attended to his family affairs, reached the house of his godson, Cornelius van Baerle, one evening in the month of January, 1672.

De Witt, although being very little of a horticulturist or of an artist, went over the whole mansion, from the studio to the green-house, inspecting everything, from the pictures down to the tulips. He thanked his godson for having joined him on the deck of the admiral's ship, "The Seven Provinces," during the battle of Southwold Bay, and for having given his name to a magnificent tulip; and whilst he thus, with the kindness and affability of a father to a son, visited Van Baerle's treasures, the crowd gathered with curiosity, and even respect, before the door of the happy man.

All this hubbub excited the attention of Boxtel, who was just taking his meal by his fireside. He inquired what it meant, and, on being informed of the cause of all this stir, climbed up to his post of observation, where, in spite of the cold, he took his stand, with the telescope to his eye.

This telescope had not been of great service to him since the autumn of 1671. The tulips, like true daughters of the East, averse to cold, do not abide in the open ground in winter. They need the shelter of the house, the soft bed on the shelves, and the congenial warmth of the stove. Van Baerle, therefore, passed the whole winter in his laboratory, in the midst of his books and pictures. He went only rarely to the room where he kept his bulbs, unless it were to allow some occasional rays of the sun to enter, by opening one of the movable sashes of the glass front.

On the evening of which we are speaking, after the two Corneliuses had visited together all the apartments of the house, whilst a train of domestics followed their steps, De Witt said in a low voice to Van Baerle, —

“My dear son, send these people away, and let us be alone for some minutes.”

The younger Cornelius, bowing assent, said aloud, —

“Would you now, sir, please to see my dry-room?”

The dry-room, this pantheon, this *sanctum sanctorum* of the tulip-fancier, was, as Delphi of old, interdicted to the profane uninitiated.

Never had any of his servants been bold enough to set his foot there. Cornelius admitted only the inoffensive broom of an old Frisian housekeeper, who had been his nurse, and who from the time when he had devoted himself to the culture of tulips ventured no longer to put onions in his stews, for fear of pulling to pieces and mincing the idol of her foster child.

At the mere mention of the *dry-room*, therefore, the servants who were carrying the lights respectfully fell back. Cornelius, taking the candlestick from the hands of the foremost, conducted his godfather into that room, which was no other than that very cabinet with a glass front into which Boxtel was continually prying with his telescope.

The envious spy was watching more intently than ever.

First of all he saw the walls and windows lit up.

Then two dark figures appeared.

One of them, tall, majestic, stern, sat down near the table on which Van Baerle had placed the taper.

In this figure, Boxtel recognised the pale features of Cornelius de Witt, whose long hair, parted in front, fell over his shoulders.

De Witt, after having said some few words to Cornelius, the meaning of which the prying neighbour could not read in the movement of his lips, took from his breast pocket a white parcel, carefully sealed, which Boxtel, judging from the manner in which Cornelius received it, and placed it in

one of the presses, supposed to contain papers of the greatest importance.

His first thought was that this precious deposit enclosed some newly imported bulbs from Bengal or Ceylon; but he soon reflected that Cornelius de Witt was very little addicted to tulip-growing, and that he only occupied himself with the affairs of man, a pursuit by far less peaceful and agreeable than that of the florist. He therefore came to the conclusion that the parcel contained simply some papers, and that these papers were relating to politics.

But why should papers of political import be intrusted to Van Baerle, who not only was, but also boasted of being, an entire stranger to the science of government, which, in his opinion, was more occult than alchemy itself?

It was undoubtedly a deposit which Cornelius de Witt, already threatened by the unpopularity with which his countrymen were going to honour him, was placing in the hands of his godson; a contrivance so much the more cleverly devised, as it certainly was not at all likely that it should be searched for at the house of one who had always stood aloof from every sort of intrigue.

And, besides, if the parcel had been made up of bulbs, Bortel knew his neighbour too well not to expect that Van Baerle would not have lost one moment in satisfying his curiosity and feasting his eyes on the present which he had received.

But, on the contrary, Cornelius had received the parcel from the hands of his godfather with every mark of respect, and put it by with the same respectful manner in a drawer, stowing it away so that it should not take up too much of the room which was reserved to his bulbs.

The parcel thus being secreted, Cornelius de Witt got up, pressed the hand of his godson, and turned towards the door, Van Baerle seizing the candlestick, and lighting him on his way down to the street, which was still crowded with people who wished to see their great fellow citizen getting into his coach.

Bortel had not been mistaken in his supposition. The deposit intrusted to Van Baerle, and carefully locked up by him, was nothing more nor less than John de Witt's correspondence with the Marquis de Louvois, the war minister of the King of France; only the godfather forbore giving to his godson the least intimation concerning the political importance of the secret, merely desiring him not to deliver the parcel to any one but to himself, or to whomsoever he should send to claim it in his name.

And Van Baerle, as we have seen, locked it up with his most precious bulbs, to think no more of it, after his godfather had left him; very unlike Bortel, who looked upon this parcel as a clever pilot does on the distant and scarcely perceptible cloud which is increasing on its way, and which is fraught with a storm.

Little dreaming of the jealous hatred of his neighbour, Van Baerle had proceeded step by step towards gaining the prize offered by the Horticultural Society of Haarlem. He had progressed from hazel-nut shade to that of roasted coffee; and on the very day when the frightful events took place at the Hague which we have related in the preceding chapters, we find him, about one o'clock in the day, gathering from the border the young suckers raised from tulips of the colour of roasted coffee; and which, being expected to flower for the first time in the spring of 1675, would undoubtedly produce the large black tulip required by the Haarlem Society.

On the 20th of August, 1672, at one o'clock, Cornelius was therefore in his dry-room, with his feet resting on the foot-bar of the table, and his elbows on the cover, looking with intense delight on three suckers which he had just detached from the mother bulb, pure, perfect, and entire, and from which was to grow that wonderful produce of horticulture which would render the name of Cornelius van Baerle for ever illustrious.

"I shall find the black tulip," said Cornelius to himself, whilst detaching the suckers. "I shall obtain the hundred

thousand guilders offered by the Society. I shall distribute them among the poor of Dort; and thus the hatred which every rich man has to encounter in times of civil wars will be soothed down, and I shall be able, without fearing any harm either from Republicans or Orangists, to keep as heretofore my borders in splendid condition. I need no more be afraid lest on the day of a riot the shopkeepers of the town and the sailors of the port should come and tear out my bulbs, to boil them as onions for their families, as they have sometimes quietly threatened when they happened to remember my having paid two or three hundred guilders for one bulb. It is therefore settled I shall give the hundred thousand guilders of the Haarlem prize to the poor. And yet — ”

Here Cornelius stopped and heaved a sigh. “And yet,” he continued, “it would have been so very delightful to spend the hundred thousand guilders on the enlargement of my tulip-bed, or even on a journey to the East, the country of beautiful flowers. But, alas! these are no thoughts for the present times, when muskets, standards, proclamations, and beating of drums are the order of the day.”

Van Baerle raised his eyes to heaven and sighed again. Then turning his glance towards his bulbs, — objects of much greater importance to him than all those muskets, standards, drums, and proclamations, which he conceived only to be fit to disturb the minds of honest people, — he said: —

“These are, indeed, beautiful bulbs; how smooth they are, how well formed; there is that air of melancholy about them which promises to produce a flower of the colour of ebony. On their skin you cannot even distinguish the circulating veins with the naked eye. Certainly, certainly, not a light spot will disfigure the tulip which I have called into existence. And by what name shall we call this offspring of my sleepless nights, of my labour and my thought? *Tulipa nigra Barlænsis*?

“Yes, *Barlænsis*; a fine name. All the tulip-fanciers —

that is to say, all the intelligent people of Europe — will feel a thrill of excitement when the rumour spreads to the four quarters of the globe: THE GRAND BLACK TULIP IS FOUND! 'How is it called?' the fanciers will ask. — '*Tulipa nigra Barlaensis!*' — 'Why *Barlaensis*?' — 'After its grower, Van Baerle,' will be the answer. — 'And who is this Van Baerle?' — 'It is the same who has already produced five new tulips: the Jane, the John de Witt, the Cornelius de Witt, etc.' Well, that is what I call my ambition. It will cause tears to no one. And people will talk of my *Tulipa nigra Barlaensis* when perhaps my godfather, this sublime politician, is only known from the tulip to which I have given his name.

"Oh! these darling bulbs!"

"When my tulip has flowered," Baerle continued in his soliloquy, "and when tranquillity is restored in Holland, I shall give to the poor only fifty thousand guilders, which, after all, is a goodly sum for a man who is under no obligation whatever. Then, with the remaining fifty thousand guilders, I shall make experiments. With them I shall succeed in imparting scent to the tulip. Ah! if I succeed in giving it the odour of the rose or the carnation, or, what would be still better, a completely new scent; if I restored to this queen of flowers its natural distinctive perfume, which she has lost in passing from her Eastern to her European throne, and which she must have in the Indian peninsula at Goa, Bombay, and Madras, and especially in that island which in olden times, as is asserted, was the terrestrial paradise, and which is called Ceylon, — oh, what glory! I must say, I would then rather be Cornelius van Baerle than Alexander, Cæsar, or Maximilian.

"Oh the admirable bulbs!"

Thus Cornelius indulged in the delights of contemplation, and was carried away by the sweetest dreams.

Suddenly the bell of his cabinet was rung much more violently than usual.

Cornelius, startled, laid his hands on his bulbs, and turned round.

"Who is here?" he asked.

"Sir," answered the servant; "it is a messenger from the Hague."

"A messenger from the Hague! What does he want?"

"Sir, it is Craeke."

"Craeke! the confidential servant of Mynheer John de Witt? Good, let him wait."

"I cannot wait," said a voice in the lobby.

And at the same time forcing his way in, Craeke rushed into the dry-room.

This abrupt entrance was such an infringement on the established rules of the household of Cornelius van Baerle, that the latter, at the sight of Craeke, almost convulsively moved his hand which covered the bulbs, so that two of them fell on the floor, one of them rolling under a small table, and the other into the fireplace.

"Zounds!" said Cornelius, eagerly picking up his precious bulbs, "what's the matter?"

"The matter, sir!" said Craeke, laying a paper on the large table, on which the third bulb was lying, — "the matter is, that you are requested to read this paper without losing one moment."

And Craeke, who thought he had remarked in the streets of Dort symptoms of a tumult similar to that which he had witnessed before his departure from the Hague, ran off without even looking behind him.

"All right! all right! my dear Craeke," said Cornelius, stretching his arm under the table for the bulb; "your paper shall be read, indeed it shall."

Then, examining the bulb, which he held in the hollow of his hand, he said: "Well, here is one of them uninjured. That confounded Craeke! thus to rush into my dry-room; let us now look after the other."

And without laying down the bulb which he already held, Baerle went to the fireplace, knelt down, and stirred with the tip of his finger the ashes, which fortunately were quite cold.

He at once felt the other bulb.

"Well, here it is," he said; and, looking at it with almost fatherly affection, he exclaimed, "Uninjured as the first!"

At this very instant, and whilst Cornelius, still on his knees, was examining his pets, the door of the dry-room was so violently shaken, and opened in such a brusque manner, that Cornelius felt rising in his cheeks and his ears the glow of that evil counsellor which is called wrath.

"Now, what is it again," he demanded; "are people going mad here?"

"Oh, sir! sir!" cried the servant, rushing into the dry-room with a much paler face and with a much more frightened mien than Craeke had shown.

"Well!" asked Cornelius, foreboding some mischief from this double breach of the strict rule of his house.

"Oh, sir, fly! fly quick!" cried the servant.

"Fly! and what for?"

"Sir, the house is full of the guards of the States."

"What do they want?"

"They want you."

"What for?"

"To arrest you."

"Arrest me? arrest me, do you say?"

"Yes, sir, and they are headed by a magistrate."

"What's the meaning of all this?" said Van Baerle, grasping in his hands the two bulbs, and directing his terrified glance towards the staircase.

"They are coming up! they are coming up!" cried the servant.

"Oh, my dear child, my worthy master!" cried the old housekeeper, who now likewise made her appearance in the dry-room, "take your gold, your jewelry, and fly, fly!"

"But how shall I make my escape, nurse?" said Van Baerle.

"Jump out of the window."

"Twenty-five feet from the ground!"

"But you will fall on six feet of soft soil!"

"Yes, but I should fall on my tulips."

"Never mind, jump out."

Cornelius took the third bulb, approached the window, and opened it, but seeing what havoc he would necessarily cause in his borders, and, more than this, what a height he would have to jump, he called out, "Never!" and fell back a step.

At this moment they saw across the banister of the staircase the points of the halberds of the soldiers rising.

The housekeeper raised her hands to heaven.

As to Cornelius van Baerle, it must be stated to his honour, not as a man, but as a tulip-fancier, his only thought was for his inestimable bulbs.

Looking about for a paper in which to wrap them up, he noticed the fly-leaf from the Bible, which Craeke had laid upon the table, took it without in his confusion remembering whence it came, folded in it the three bulbs, secreted them in his bosom, and waited.

At this very moment the soldiers, preceded by a magistrate, entered the room.

"Are you Dr. Cornelius van Baerle?" demanded the magistrate (who, although knowing the young man very well, put his question according to the forms of justice, which gave his proceedings a much more dignified air).

"I am that person, Master van Spennen," answered Cornelius, politely, to his judge, "and you know it very well."

"Then give up to us the seditious papers which you secrete in your house."

"The seditious papers!" repeated Cornelius, quite dumfounded at the imputation.

"Now don't look astonished, if you please."

"I vow to you, Master van Spennen," Cornelius replied, "that I am completely at a loss to understand what you want."

"Then I shall put you in the way, Doctor," said the judge;

"give up to us the papers which the traitor Cornelius de Witt deposited with you in the month of January last."

A sudden light came into the mind of Cornelius.

"Halloa!" said Van Spennen, "you begin now to remember, don't you?"

"Indeed I do; but you spoke of seditious papers, and I have none of that sort."

"You deny it then?"

"Certainly I do."

The magistrate turned round and took a rapid survey of the whole cabinet.

"Where is the apartment you call your dry-room?" he asked.

"The very same where you now are, Master van Spennen."

The magistrate cast a glance at a small note at the top of his papers.

"All right," he said, like a man who is sure of his ground.

Then, turning round towards Cornelius, he continued, "Will you give up those papers to me?"

"But I cannot, Master van Spennen; those papers do not belong to me; they have been deposited with me as a trust, and a trust is sacred."

"Dr. Cornelius," said the judge, "in the name of the States, I order you to open this drawer, and to give up to me the papers which it contains."

Saying this, the judge pointed with his finger, to the third drawer of the press, near the fireplace.

In this very drawer, indeed, the papers deposited by the Warden of the Dikes with his godson were lying; a proof that the police had received very exact information.

"Ah! you will not," said Van Spennen, when he saw Cornelius standing immovable and bewildered; "then I shall open the drawer myself."

And, pulling out the drawer to its full length, the magistrate at first alighted on about twenty bulbs, carefully

arranged and ticketed, and then on the paper parcel, which had remained in exactly the same state as it was when delivered by the unfortunate Cornelius de Witt to his godson.

The magistrate broke the seals, tore off the envelope, cast an eager glance on the first leaves which met his eye, and then, exclaimed, in a terrible voice, —

“Well, justice has been rightly informed after all!”

“How,” said Cornelius, “how is this?”

“Don’t pretend to be ignorant, Mynheer van Baerle,” answered the magistrate. “Follow me.”

“How’s that! follow you?” cried the Doctor.

“Yes, sir, for in the name of the States I arrest you.”

Arrests were not as yet made in the name of William of Orange; he had not been Stadtholder long enough for that.

“Arrest me!” cried Cornelius; “but what have I done?”

“That’s no affair of mine, Doctor; you will explain all that before your judges.”

“Where?”

“At the Hague.”

Cornelius, in mute stupefaction, embraced his old nurse, who was in a swoon; shook hands with his servants, who were bathed in tears, and followed the magistrate, who put him in a coach as a prisoner of state and had him driven at full gallop to the Hague.

CHAPTER VIII.

AN INVASION.

THE incident just related was, as the reader has guessed before this, the diabolical work of Mynheer Isaac Bortel.

It will be remembered that, with the help of his telescope, not even the least detail of the private meeting between Cornelius de Witt and Van Baerle had escaped him. He had, indeed, heard nothing; but he had seen everything, and had rightly concluded that the papers intrusted by the Warden to the Doctor must have been of great importance, as he saw Van Baerle so carefully secreting the parcel in the drawer where he used to keep his most precious bulbs.

The upshot of all this was that when Bortel, who watched the course of political events much more attentively than his neighbour Cornelius was used to do, heard the news of the brothers De Witt being arrested on a charge of high treason against the States, he thought within his heart that very likely he needed only to say one word, and the godson would be arrested as well as the godfather.

Yet, full of happiness as was Bortel's heart at the chance, he at first shrank with horror from the idea of informing against a man whom this information might lead to the scaffold.

But there is this terrible thing in evil thoughts, that evil minds soon grow familiar with them.

Besides this, Mynheer Isaac Bortel encouraged himself with the following sophism:—

“Cornelius de Witt is a bad citizen, as he is charged with high treason, and arrested.

“I, on the contrary, am a good citizen, as I am not charged with anything in the world, as I am as free as the air of heaven.

"If, therefore, Cornelius de Witt is a bad citizen, — of which there can be no doubt, as he is charged with high treason, and arrested, — his accomplice, Cornelius van Baerle, is no less a bad citizen than himself.

"And, as I am a good citizen, and as it is the duty of every good citizen to inform against the bad ones, it is my duty to inform against Cornelius van Baerle."

Specious as this mode of reasoning might sound, it would not perhaps have taken so complete a hold of Boxtel, nor would he perhaps have yielded to the mere desire of vengeance which was gnawing at his heart, had not the demon of envy been joined with that of cupidity.

Boxtel was quite aware of the progress which Van Baerle had made towards producing the grand black tulip.

Dr. Cornelius, notwithstanding all his modesty, had not been able to hide from his most intimate friends that he was all but certain to win, in the year of grace 1673, the prize of a hundred thousand guilders offered by the Horticultural Society of Haarlem.

It was just this certainty of Cornelius van Baerle that caused the fever which raged in the heart of Isaac Boxtel.

If Cornelius should be arrested there would necessarily be a great upset in his house, and during the night after his arrest no one would think of keeping watch over the tulips in his garden.

Now in that night Boxtel would climb over the wall, and, as he knew the position of the bulb which was to produce the grand black tulip, he would filch it; and instead of flowering for Cornelius, it would flower for him, Isaac; he also, instead of Van Baerle, would have the prize of a hundred thousand guilders, not to speak of the sublime honour of calling the new flower *Tulipa nigra Boxtellensis*, — a result which would satisfy not only his vengeance, but also his cupidity and his ambition.

Awake, he thought of nothing but the grand black tulip; asleep, he dreamed of it.

At last, on the 19th of August, about two o'clock in the

afternoon, the temptation grew so strong, that Mynheer Isaac was no longer able to resist it.

Accordingly, he wrote an anonymous information, the minute exactness of which made up for its want of authenticity, and posted his letter.

Never did a venomous paper, slipped into the jaws of the bronze lions at Venice, produce a more prompt and terrible effect.

On the same evening the letter reached the principal magistrate, who without a moment's delay convoked his colleagues early for the next morning. On the following morning, therefore, they assembled, and decided on Van Baerle's arrest, placing the order for its execution in the hands of master Van Spennen, who, as we have seen, performed his duty like a true Hollander, and who arrested the Doctor at the very hour when the Orange party at the Hague were roasting the bleeding shreds of flesh torn from the corpses of Cornelius and John de Witt.

But, whether from a feeling of shame or from craven weakness, Isaac Boxtel did not venture that day to point his telescope either at the garden, or at the laboratory, or at the dry-room.

He knew too well what was about to happen in the house of the poor doctor to feel any desire to look into it. He did not even get up when his only servant—who envied the lot of the servants of Cornelius just as bitterly as Boxtel did that of their master—entered his bedroom. He said to the man,—

“I shall not get up to-day; I am ill.”

About nine o'clock he heard a great noise in the street, which made him tremble; at this moment he was paler than a real invalid, and shook more violently than a man in the height of fever.

His servant entered the room; Boxtel hid himself under the counterpane.

“Oh, sir!” cried the servant, not without some inkling that, whilst deploring the mishap which had befallen Van

Baerle, he was announcing agreeable news to his master, — “oh, sir! you do not know, then, what is happening at this moment?”

“How can I know it?” answered Boxtel, with an almost unintelligible voice.

“Well, Mynheer Boxtel, at this moment your neighbour Cornelius van Baerle is arrested for high treason.”

“Nonsense!” Boxtel muttered, with a faltering voice; “the thing is impossible.”

“Faith, sir, at any rate that’s what people say; and, besides, I have seen Judge van Spennen with the archers entering the house.”

“Well, if you have seen it with your own eyes, that’s a different case altogether.”

“At all events,” said the servant, “I shall go and inquire once more. Be you quiet, sir, I shall let you know all about it.”

Boxtel contented himself with signifying his approval of the zeal of his servant by dumb show.

The man went out, and returned in half an hour.

“Oh, sir, all that I told you is indeed quite true.”

“How so?”

“Mynheer van Baerle is arrested, and has been put into a carriage, and they are driving him to the Hague.”

“To the Hague!”

“Yes, to the Hague; and if what people say is true, it won’t do him much good.”

“And what do they say?” Boxtel asked.

“Faith, sir, they say — but it is not quite sure — that by this hour the burghers must be murdering Mynheer Cornelius and Mynheer John de Witt.”

“Oh,” muttered, or rather growled Boxtel, closing his eyes from the dreadful picture which presented itself to his imagination.

“Why, to be sure,” said the servant to himself, whilst leaving the room, “Mynheer Isaac Boxtel must be very sick not to have jumped from his bed on hearing such good news.”

And, in reality, Isaac Boxel was very sick, like a man who has murdered another.

But he had murdered his man with a double object; the first was attained, the second was still to be attained.

Night closed in. It was the night which Boxel had looked forward to.

As soon as it was dark he got up.

He then climbed into his sycamore.

He had calculated correctly; no one thought of keeping watch over the garden; the house and the servants were all in the utmost confusion.

He heard the clock strike — ten, eleven, twelve.

At midnight, with a beating heart, trembling hands, and a livid countenance, he descended from the tree, took a ladder, leaned it against the wall, mounted it to the last step but one, and listened.

All was perfectly quiet, not a sound broke the silence of the night; one solitary light, that of the housekeeper, was burning in the house.

This silence and this darkness emboldened Boxel; he got astride the wall, stopped for an instant, and, after having ascertained that there was nothing to fear, he put his ladder from his own garden into that of Cornelius, and descended.

Then, knowing to an inch where the bulbs which were to produce the black tulip were planted, he ran towards the spot, following, however, the gravelled walks in order not to be betrayed by his footprints, and, on arriving at the precise spot, he proceeded, with the eagerness of a tiger, to plunge his hand into the soft ground.

He found nothing, and thought he was mistaken.

In the mean while, the cold sweat stood on his brow.

He felt about close by it, — nothing.

He felt about on the right, and on the left, — nothing.

He felt about in front and at the back, — nothing.

He was nearly mad, when at last he satisfied himself that on that very morning the earth had been disturbed.

In fact, whilst Boxtel was lying in bed, Cornelius had gone down to his garden, had taken up the mother bulb, and, as we have seen, divided it into three.

Boxtel could not bring himself to leave the place. He dug up with his hands more than ten square feet of ground.

At last no doubt remained of his misfortune. Mad with rage, he returned to his ladder, mounted the wall, drew up the ladder, flung it into his own garden, and jumped after it.

All at once, a last ray of hope presented itself to his mind: the seedling bulbs might be in the dry-room; it was therefore only requisite to make his entry there as he had done into the garden.

There he would find them; and, moreover, it was not at all difficult, as the sashes of the dry-room might be raised like those of a greenhouse. Cornelius had opened them on that morning, and no one had thought of closing them again.

Everything, therefore, depended upon whether he could procure a ladder of sufficient length,—one of twenty-five feet instead of ten.

Boxtel had noticed in the street where he lived a house which was being repaired, and against which a very tall ladder was placed.

This ladder would do admirably, unless the workmen had taken it away.

He ran to the house: the ladder was there. Boxtel took it, carried it with great exertion to his garden, and with even greater difficulty raised it against the wall of van Baerle's house, where it just reached to the window.

Boxtel put a lighted dark lantern into his pocket, mounted the ladder, and slipped into the dry-room.

On reaching this sanctuary of the florist he stopped, supporting himself against the table; his legs failed him, his heart beat as if it would choke him. Here it was even worse than in the garden; there Boxtel was only a trespasser, here he was a thief.

However, he took courage again: he had not gone so far to turn back with empty hands.

But in vain did he search the whole room, open and shut all the drawers, even that privileged one where the parcel, which had been so fatal to Cornelius had been deposited; he found ticketed, as in a botanical garden, the "Jane," the "John de Witt," the hazel-nut, and the roasted-coffee coloured tulip; but of the black tulip, or rather the seedling bulbs within which it was still sleeping, not a trace was found.

And yet, on looking over the register of seeds and bulbs, which Van Baerle kept in duplicate, if possible even with greater exactitude and care than the first commercial houses of Amsterdam their ledgers, Boxtel read these lines:—

"To-day, 20th of August, 1672, I have taken up the mother bulb of the grand black tulip, which I have divided into three perfect suckers."

"Oh these bulbs, these bulbs!" howled Boxtel, turning over everything in the dry-room, "where could he have concealed them?"

Then, suddenly striking his forehead in his frenzy, he called out, "Oh wretch that I am! Oh thrice fool Boxtel! Would any one be separated from his bulbs? Would any one leave them at Dort, when one goes to the Hague? Could one live far from one's bulbs, when they enclose the grand black tulip? He had time to get hold of them, the scoundrel, he has them about him, he has taken them to the Hague!"

It was like a flash of lightning which showed to Boxtel the abyss of a uselessly committed crime.

Boxtel sank quite paralyzed on that very table, and on that very spot where, some hours before, the unfortunate Van Baerle had so leisurely, and with such intense delight, contemplated his darling bulbs.

"Well, then, after all," said the envious Boxtel,—raising his livid face from his hands in which it had been buried,— "if he has them, he can keep them only as long as he lives, and —"

The rest of this detestable thought was expressed by a hideous smile.

"The bulbs are at the Hague," he said, "therefore, I can no longer live at Dort: away, then, for them, to the Hague! to the Hague!"

And Boxtel, without taking any notice of the treasures about him, so entirely were his thoughts absorbed by another inestimable treasure, let himself out by the window, glided down the ladder, carried it back to the place whence he had taken it, and, like a beast of prey, returned growling to his house.

CHAPTER IX.

THE FAMILY CELL.

It was about midnight when poor Van Baerle was locked up in the prison of the Buytenhof.

What Rosa foresaw had come to pass. On finding the cell of Cornelius de Witt empty, the wrath of the people ran very high, and had Gryphus fallen into the hands of those madmen he would certainly have had to pay with his life for the prisoner.

But this fury had vented itself most fully on the two brothers when they were overtaken by the murderers, thanks to the precaution which William — the man of precautions — had taken in having the gates of the city closed.

A momentary lull had therefore set in whilst the prison was empty, and Rosa availed herself of this favourable moment to come forth from her hiding place, which she also induced her father to leave.

The prison was therefore completely deserted. Why should people remain in the jail whilst murder was going on at the Tol-Hek?

Gryphus came forth trembling behind the courageous Rosa. They went to close the great gate, at least as well as it would close, considering that it was half demolished. It was easy to see that a hurricane of mighty fury had vented itself upon it.

About four o'clock a return of the noise was heard, but of no threatening character to Gryphus and his daughter. The people were only dragging in the two corpses, which they came back to gibbet at the usual place of execution.

Rosa hid herself this time also, but only that she might not see the ghastly spectacle.

At midnight, people again knocked at the gate of the jail, or rather at the barricade which served in its stead: it was Cornelius van Baerle whom they were bringing.

When the jailer received this new inmate, and saw from the warrant the name and station of his prisoner, he muttered with his turnkey smile, —

“Godson of Cornelius de Witt! Well, young man, we have the family cell here, and we will give it to you.”

And quite enchanted with his joke, the ferocious Orangeman took his cresset and his keys to conduct Cornelius to the cell, which on that very morning Cornelius de Witt had left to go into exile, or what in revolutionary times is meant instead by those sublime philosophers who lay it down as an axiom of high policy, “It is the dead only who do not return.”

On the way which the despairing florist had to traverse to reach that cell he heard nothing but the barking of a dog, and saw nothing but the face of a young girl.

The dog rushed forth from a niche in the wall, shaking his heavy chain, and sniffing all round Cornelius in order so much the better to recognise him in case he should be ordered to pounce upon him.

The young girl, whilst the prisoner was mounting the staircase, appeared at the narrow door of her chamber, which opened on that very flight of steps; and, holding the lamp in her right hand, she at the same time lit up her pretty blooming face, surrounded by a profusion of rich wavy golden locks, whilst with her left she held her white night-dress closely over her breast, having been roused from her first slumber by the unexpected arrival of Van Baerle.

It would have made a fine picture, worthy of Rembrandt, the gloomy winding stairs illuminated by the reddish glare of the cresset of Gryphus, with his scowling jailer's countenance at the top, the melancholy figure of Cornelius

bending over the banister to look down upon the sweet face of Rosa, standing, as it were, in the bright frame of the door of her chamber, with embarrassed mien at being thus seen by a stranger.

And at the bottom, quite in the shade, where the details are absorbed in the obscurity, the mastiff, with his eyes glistening like carbuncles, and shaking his chain, on which the double light from the lamp of Rosa and the lantern of Gryphus threw a brilliant glitter.

The sublime master would, however, have been altogether unable to render the sorrow expressed in the face of Rosa, when she saw this pale, handsome young man slowly climbing the stairs, and thought of the full import of the words, which her father had just spoken, "*You will have the family cell.*"

This vision lasted but a moment, — much less time than we have taken to describe it. Gryphus then proceeded on his way, Cornelius was forced to follow him, and five minutes afterwards he entered his prison, of which it is unnecessary to say more, as the reader is already acquainted with it.

Gryphus pointed with his finger to the bed on which the martyr had suffered so much, who on that day had rendered his soul to God. Then, taking up his cresset, he quitted the cell.

Thus left alone, Cornelius threw himself on his bed, but he slept not; he kept his eye fixed on the narrow window, barred with iron, which looked on the Buytenhof; and in this way saw from behind the trees that first pale beam of light which morning sheds on the earth as a white mantle.

Now and then during the night horses had galloped at a smart pace over the Buytenhof, the heavy tramp of the patrols had resounded from the pavement, and the slow matches of the arquebuses, flaring in the east wind, had thrown up at intervals a sudden glare as far as to the panes of his window.

But when the rising sun began to gild the coping stones at the gable ends of the houses, Cornelius, eager to know whether there was any living creature about him, approached the window, and cast a sad look round the circular yard before him.

At the end of the yard a dark mass, tinted with a dingy blue by the morning dawn, rose before him, its dark outlines standing out in contrast to the houses already illuminated by the pale light of early morning.

Cornelius recognised the gibbet.

On it were suspended two shapeless trunks, which indeed were no more than bleeding skeletons.

The good people of the Hague had chopped off the flesh of its victims, but faithfully carried the remainder to the gibbet, to have a pretext for a double inscription written on a huge placard, on which Cornelius, with the keen sight of a young man of twenty-eight, was able to read the following lines, daubed by the coarse brush of a sign-painter: —

“Here are hanging the great rogue of the name of John de Witt, and the little rogue Cornelius de Witt, his brother, two enemies of the people, but great friends of the king of France.”

Cornelius uttered a cry of horror, and in the agony of his frantic terror knocked with his hands and feet at the door so violently and continuously, that Gryphus, with his huge bunch of keys in his hand, ran furiously up.

The jailer opened the door, with terrible imprecations against the prisoner who disturbed him at an hour which Master Gryphus was not accustomed to be aroused.

“Well, now, by my soul, he is mad, this new De Witt,” he cried; “but all those De Witts have the devil in them.”

“Master, master,” cried Cornelius, seizing the jailer by the arm and dragging him towards the window, — “master, what have I read down there?”

“Where down there?”

"On that placard."

And, trembling, pale, and gasping for breath, he pointed to the gibbet at the other side of the yard, with the cynical inscription surmounting it.

Gryphus broke out into a laugh.

"Eh! eh!" he answered, "so, you have read it. Well, my good sir, that's what people will get for corresponding with the enemies of his Highness the Prince of Orange."

"The brothers De Witt are murdered!" Cornelius muttered, with the cold sweat on his brow, and sank on his bed, his arms hanging by his side, and his eyes closed.

"The brothers De Witt have been judged by the people," said Gryphus; "you call that murdered, do you? well, I call it executed."

And seeing that the prisoner was not only quiet, but entirely prostrate and senseless, he rushed from the cell, violently slamming the door, and noisily drawing the bolts.

Recovering his consciousness, Cornelius found himself alone, and recognised the room where he was, — "the family cell," as Gryphus had called it, — as the fatal passage leading to ignominious death.

And as he was a philosopher, and, more than that, as he was a Christian, he began to pray for the soul of his godfather, then for that of the Grand Pensionary, and at last submitted with resignation to all the sufferings which God might ordain for him.

Then turning again to the concerns of earth, and having satisfied himself that he was alone in his dungeon, he drew from his breast the three bulbs of the black tulip, and concealed them behind a block of stone, on which the traditional water-jug of the prison was standing, in the darkest corner of his cell.

Useless labour of so many years! such sweet hopes crushed; his discovery was, after all, to lead to naught, just as his own career was to be cut short. Here, in his prison, there was not a trace of vegetation, not an atom of soil, not a ray of sunshine.

At this thought Cornelius fell into a gloomy despair, from which he was only aroused by an extraordinary circumstance.

What was this circumstance?

We shall inform the reader in our next chapter.

CHAPTER X.

THE JAILER'S DAUGHTER.

ON the same evening Gryphus, as he brought the prisoner his mess, slipped on the damp flags whilst opening the door of the cell, and fell, in the attempt to steady himself, on his hand; but as it was turned the wrong way, he broke his arm just above the wrist.

Cornelius rushed forward towards the jailer, but Gryphus, who was not yet aware of the serious nature of his injury, called out to him, —

“It is nothing: don’t you stir.”

He then tried to support himself on his arm, but the bone gave way; then only he felt the pain, and uttered a cry.

When he became aware that his arm was broken, this man, so harsh to others, fell swooning on the threshold, where he remained motionless and cold, as if dead.

During all this time the door of the cell stood open, and Cornelius found himself almost free. But the thought never entered his mind of profiting by this accident; he had seen from the manner in which the arm was bent, and from the noise it made in bending, that the bone was fractured, and that the patient must be in great pain; and now he thought of nothing else but of administering relief to the sufferer, however little benevolent the man had shown himself during their short interview.

At the noise of Gryphus’s fall, and at the cry which escaped him, a hasty step was heard on the staircase, and immediately after a lovely apparition presented itself to the eyes of Cornelius.

It was the beautiful young Frisian, who, seeing her father stretched on the ground, and the prisoner bending over him, uttered a faint cry, as in the first fright she thought Gryphus, whose brutality she well knew, had fallen in consequence of a struggle between him and the prisoner.

Cornelius understood what was passing in the mind of the girl, at the very moment when the suspicion arose in her heart.

But one moment told her the true state of the case, and, ashamed of her first thoughts, she cast her beautiful eyes, wet with tears, on the young man, and said to him, —

“I beg your pardon, and thank you, sir; the first for what I have thought, and the second for what you are doing.”

Cornelius blushed, and said, “I am but doing my duty as a Christian in helping my neighbour.”

“Yes, and affording him your help this evening, you have forgotten the abuse which he heaped on you this morning. Oh, sir! this is more than humanity, — this is indeed Christian charity.”

Cornelius cast his eyes on the beautiful girl, quite astonished to hear from the mouth of one so humble such a noble and feeling speech.

But he had no time to express his surprise. Gryphus recovered from his swoon, opened his eyes, and as his brutality was returning with his senses, he growled, “That’s it, a fellow is in a hurry to bring to a prisoner his supper, and falls and breaks his arm, and is left lying on the ground.”

“Hush, my father,” said Rosa, “you are unjust to this gentleman, whom I found endeavouring to give you his aid.”

“His aid?” Gryphus replied, with a doubtful air.

“It is quite true, master! I am quite ready to help you still more.”

“You!” said Gryphus, “are you a medical man?”

"It was formerly my profession."

"And so you would be able to set my arm?"

"Perfectly."

"And what would you need to do it? let us hear."

"Two splinters of wood, and some linen for a bandage."

"Do you hear, Rosa?" said Gryphus, "the prisoner is going to set my arm, that's a saving; come, assist me to get up, I feel as heavy as lead."

Rosa lent the sufferer her shoulder; he put his unhurt arm around her neck, and making an effort, got on his legs, whilst Cornelius, to save him a walk, pushed a chair towards him.

Gryphus sat down; then, turning towards his daughter, he said, —

"Well, did n't you hear? go and fetch what is wanted."

Rosa went down, and immediately after returned with two staves of a small barrel and a large roll of linen bandage.

Cornelius had made use of the intervening moments to take off the man's coat, and to tuck up his shirt sleeve.

"Is this what you require, sir?" asked Rosa.

"Yes, mademoiselle," answered Cornelius, looking at the things she had brought, — "yes, that's right. Now push this table, whilst I support the arm of your father."

Rosa pushed the table, Cornelius placed the broken arm on it so as to make it flat, and with perfect skill set the bone, adjusted the splinters, and fastened the bandages.

At the last touch, the jailer fainted a second time.

"Go and fetch vinegar, mademoiselle," said Cornelius; "we will bathe his temples, and he will recover."

But, instead of acting up to the doctor's prescription, Rosa, after having satisfied herself that her father was still unconscious, approached Cornelius and said, —

"Service for service, sir."

"What do you mean, my pretty child?" said Cornelius.

"I mean to say, sir, that the judge who is to examine you to-morrow has inquired to-day for the room in which

you are confined, and, on being told that you are occupying the cell of Mynheer Cornelius de Witt, laughed in a very strange and very disagreeable manner, which makes me fear that no good awaits you."

"But," asked Cornelius, "what harm can they do to me?"

"Look at that gibbet."

"But I am not guilty," said Cornelius.

"Were they guilty whom you see down there gibbeted, mangled, and torn to pieces?"

"That's true," said Cornelius, gravely.

"And besides," continued Rosa, "the people want to find you guilty. But whether innocent or guilty, your trial begins to-morrow, and the day after you will be condemned. Matters are settled very quickly in these times."

"Well, and what do you conclude from all this?"

"I conclude that I am alone, that I am weak, that my father is lying in a swoon, that the dog is muzzled, and that consequently there is nothing to prevent your making your escape. Fly, then; that's what I mean."

"What do you say?"

"I say that I was not able to save Mynheer Cornelius or Mynheer John de Witt, and that I should like to save you. Only be quick; there, my father is regaining his breath; one minute more, and he will open his eyes, and it will be too late. Do you hesitate?"

In fact, Cornelius stood immovable, looking at Rosa, yet looking at her as if he did not hear her.

"Don't you understand me?" said the young girl, with some impatience.

"Yes, I do," said Cornelius, "but—"

"But?"

"I will not; they would accuse you."

"Never mind," said Rosa blushing, "never mind that."

"You are very good, my dear child," replied Cornelius, "but I stay."

"You stay, oh, sir! oh, sir! don't you understand that you will be condemned to death, executed on the scaffold, perhaps assassinated and torn to pieces, just like Mynheer John and Mynheer Cornelius. For heaven's sake, don't think of me, but fly from this place. Take care, it bears ill luck to the De Witts!"

"Halloa!" cried the jailer, recovering his senses, "who is talking of those rogues, those wretches, those villains, the De Witts?"

"Don't be angry, my good man," said Cornelius, with his good-tempered smile, "the worst thing for a fracture is excitement, by which the blood is heated."

Thereupon, he said in an undertone to Rosa,—

"My child, I am innocent, and I shall await my trial with tranquillity and an easy mind."

"Hush," said Rosa.

"Why hush?"

"My father must not suppose that we have been talking to each other."

"What harm would that do?"

"What harm? He would never allow me to come here any more," said Rosa.

Cornelius received this innocent confidence with a smile; he felt as if a ray of good fortune were shining on his path.

"Now, then, what are you chattering there together about?" said Gryphus, rising and supporting his right arm with his left.

"Nothing," said Rosa; "the doctor is explaining to me what diet you are to keep."

"Diet, diet for me? Well, my fine girl, I shall put you on diet too."

"On what diet, my father?"

"Never to go to the cells of the prisoners, and, if ever you should happen to go, to leave them as soon as possible. Come, off with me, lead the way, and be quick,"

Rosa and Cornelius exchanged glances.
That of Rosa tried to express,
“There, you see?”
That of Cornelius said,—
“Let it be as the Lord wills.”

CHAPTER XI.

CORNELIUS VAN BAERLE'S WILL.

ROSA had not been mistaken; the judges came on the following day to the Buytenhof, and proceeded with the trial of Cornelius van Baerle. The examination, however, did not last long, it having appeared on evidence that Cornelius had kept at his house that fatal correspondence of the brothers De Witt with France.

He did not deny it.

The only point about which there seemed any difficulty was whether this correspondence had been intrusted to him by his godfather, Cornelius de Witt.

But as, since the death of those two martyrs, Van Baerle had no longer any reason for withholding the truth, he not only did not deny that the parcel had been delivered to him by Cornelius de Witt himself, but he also stated all the circumstances under which it was done.

This confession involved the godson in the crime of the godfather; manifest complicity being considered to exist between Cornelius de Witt and Cornelius van Baerle.

The honest doctor did not confine himself to this avowal, but told the whole truth with regard to his own tastes, habits, and daily life. He described his indifference to politics, his love of study, of the fine arts, of science, and of flowers. He explained that, since the day when Cornelius de Witt handed to him the parcel at Dort, he himself had never touched, nor even noticed it.

To this it was objected, that in this respect he could not possibly be speaking the truth, since the papers had been deposited in a press in which both his hands and his eyes must have been engaged every day.

Cornelius answered that it was indeed so; that, however, he never put his hand into the press but to ascertain whether his bulbs were dry, and that he never looked into it but to see if they were beginning to sprout.

To this again it was objected, that his pretended indifference respecting this deposit was not to be reasonably entertained, as he could not have received such papers from the hand of his godfather without being made acquainted with their important character.

He replied that his godfather Cornelius loved him too well, and, above all, that he was too considerate a man to have communicated to him anything of the contents of the parcel, well knowing that such a confidence would only have caused anxiety to him who received it.

To this it was objected that, if De Witt had wished to act in such a way, he would have added to the parcel, in case of accidents, a certificate setting forth that his godson was an entire stranger to the nature of this correspondence, or at least he would during his trial have written a letter to him, which might be produced as his justification.

Cornelius replied that undoubtedly his godfather could not have thought that there was any risk for the safety of his deposit, hidden as it was in a press which was looked upon as sacred as the tabernacle by the whole household of Van Baerle; and that consequently he had considered the certificate as useless. As to a letter, he certainly had some remembrance that some moments previous to his arrest, whilst he was absorbed in the contemplation of one of the rarest of his bulbs, John de Witt's servant entered his dry-room, and handed to him a paper, but the whole was to him only like a vague dream; the servant had disappeared, and as to the paper, perhaps it might be found if a proper search were made.

As far as Craeke was concerned, it was impossible to find him, as he had left Holland.

The paper also was not very likely to be found, and no one gave himself the trouble to look for it.

Cornelius himself did not much press this point, since, even supposing that the paper should turn up, it could not have any direct connection with the correspondence which constituted the crime.

The judges wished to make it appear as though they wanted to urge Cornelius to make a better defence; they displayed that benevolent patience which is generally a sign of the magistrate's being interested for the prisoner, or of a man's having so completely got the better of his adversary that he needs no longer any oppressive means to ruin him.

Cornelius did not accept of this hypocritical protection, and in a last answer, which he set forth with the noble bearing of a martyr and the calm serenity of a righteous man, he said, —

“You ask me things, gentlemen, to which I can answer only the exact truth. Hear it. The parcel was put into my hands in the way I have described; I vow before God that I was, and am still, ignorant of its contents, and that it was not until my arrest that I learned that this deposit was the correspondence of the Grand Pensionary with the Marquis de Louvois. And lastly, I vow and protest that I do not understand how any one should have known that this parcel was in my house; and, above all, how I can be deemed criminal for having received what my illustrious and unfortunate godfather brought to my house.”

This was Van Baerle's whole defence; after which the judges began to deliberate on the verdict.

They considered that every offshoot of civil discord is mischievous, because it revives the contest which it is the interest of all to put down.

One of them, who bore the character of a profound observer, laid down as his opinion that this young man, so phlegmatic in appearance, must in reality be very dangerous, as under this icy exterior he was sure to conceal an ardent desire to avenge his friends, the De Witts.

Another observed that the love of tulips agreed perfectly

well with that of politics, and that it was proved in history that many very dangerous men were engaged in gardening, just as if it had been their profession, whilst really they occupied themselves with perfectly different concerns; witness Tarquin the Elder, who grew poppies at Gabii, and the Great Condé, who watered his carnations at the dungeon of Vincennes at the very moment when the former meditated his return to Rome, and the latter his escape from prison.

The judge summed up with the following dilemma:—

“Either Cornelius van Baerle is a great lover of tulips, or a great lover of politics; in either case, he has told us a falsehood; first, because his having occupied himself with politics is proved by the letters which were found at his house; and secondly, because his having occupied himself with tulips is proved by the bulbs, which leave no doubt of the fact. And herein lies the enormity of the case. As Cornelius van Baerle was concerned in the growing of tulips and in the pursuit of politics at one and the same time, the prisoner is of hybrid character, of an amphibious organisation, working with equal ardour at politics and at tulips, which proves him to belong to the class of men most dangerous to public tranquillity, and shows a certain, or rather a complete, analogy between his character and that of those master minds of which Tarquin the Elder and the Great Condé have been felicitously quoted as examples.”

The upshot of all these reasonings was, that his Highness the Prince Stadtholder of Holland would feel infinitely obliged to the magistracy of the Hague if they simplified for him the government of the Seven Provinces by destroying even the least germ of conspiracy against his authority.

This argument capped all the others, and, in order so much the more effectually to destroy the germ of conspiracy, sentence of death was unanimously pronounced against Cornelius van Baerle, as being arraigned, and convicted, for having, under the innocent appearance of a tulip-fancier, participated in the detestable intrigues and abominable

plots of the brothers De Witt against Dutch nationality and in their secret relations with their French enemy.

A supplementary clause was tacked to the sentence, to the effect that "the aforesaid Cornelius van Baerle should be led from the prison of the Buytenhof to the scaffold in the yard of the same name, where the public executioner would cut off his head."

As this deliberation was a most serious affair, it lasted a full half-hour, during which the prisoner was remanded to his cell.

There the Recorder of the States came to read the sentence to him.

Master Gryphus was detained in bed by the fever caused by the fracture of his arm. His keys passed into the hands of one of his assistants. Behind this turnkey, who introduced the Recorder, Rosa, the fair Frisian maid, had slipped into the recess of the door, with a handkerchief to her mouth to stifle her sobs.

Cornelius listened to the sentence with an expression rather of surprise than sadness.

After the sentence was read, the Recorder asked him whether he had anything to answer.

"Indeed, I have not," he replied. "Only I confess that, among all the causes of death against which a cautious man may guard, I should never have supposed this to be comprised."

On this answer, the Recorder saluted Van Baerle with all that consideration which such functionaries generally bestow upon great criminals of every sort.

But whilst he was about to withdraw, Cornelius asked, "By the bye, Mr. Recorder, what day is the thing — you know what I mean — to take place?"

"Why, to-day," answered the Recorder, a little surprised by the self-possession of the condemned man.

A sob was heard behind the door, and Cornelius turned round to look from whom it came; but Rosa, who had foreseen this movement, had fallen back.

"And," continued Cornelius, "what hour is appointed?"

"Twelve o'clock, sir."

"Indeed," said Cornelius, "I think I heard the clock strike ten about twenty minutes ago; I have not much time to spare."

"Indeed you have not, if you wish to make your peace with God," said the Recorder, bowing to the ground. "You may ask for any clergyman you please."

Saying these words he went out backwards, and the assistant turnkey was going to follow him, and to lock the door of Cornelius's cell, when a white and trembling arm interposed between him and the heavy door.

Cornelius saw nothing but the golden brocade cap, tipped with lace, such as the Frisian girls wore; he heard nothing but some one whispering into the ear of the turnkey. But the latter put his heavy keys into the white hand which was stretched out to receive them, and, descending some steps, sat down on the staircase, which was thus guarded above by himself, and below by the dog. The head-dress turned round, and Cornelius beheld the face of Rosa, blanched with grief, and her beautiful eyes streaming with tears.

She went up to Cornelius, crossing her arms on her heaving breast.

"Oh, sir, sir!" she said, but sobs choked her utterance.

"My good girl," Cornelius replied with emotion, "what do you wish? I may tell you that my time on earth is short."

"I come to ask a favor of you," said Rosa, extending her arms partly towards him and partly towards heaven.

"Don't weep so, Rosa," said the prisoner, "for your tears go much more to my heart than my approaching fate, and you know, the less guilty a prisoner is, the more it is his duty to die calmly, and even joyfully, as he dies a martyr. Come, there's a dear, don't cry any more, and tell me what you want, my pretty Rosa."

She fell on her knees. "Forgive my father," she said,

"Your father, your father!" said Cornelius, astonished.

"Yes, he has been so harsh to you; but it is his nature, he is so to every one, and you are not the only one whom he has bullied."

"He is punished, my dear Rosa, more than punished, by the accident that has befallen him, and I forgive him."

"I thank you, sir," said Rosa. "And now tell me — oh, tell me — can I do anything for you?"

"You can dry your beautiful eyes, my dear child," answered Cornelius, with a good-tempered smile.

"But what can I do for you, — for you I mean?"

"A man who has only one hour longer to live must be a great Sybarite still to want anything, my dear Rosa."

"The clergyman whom they have proposed to you?"

"I have worshipped God all my life, I have worshipped Him in his works, and praised Him in his decrees. I am at peace with Him, and do not wish for a clergyman. The last thought which occupies my mind, however, has reference to the glory of the Almighty, and, indeed, my dear, I should ask you to help me in carrying out this last thought."

"Oh, Mynheer Cornelius, speak, speak!" exclaimed Rosa, still bathed in tears.

"Give me your hand, and promise me not to laugh, my dear child."

"Laugh," exclaimed Rosa, frantic with grief, "laugh at this moment! do you not see my tears?"

"Rosa, you are no stranger to me. I have not seen much of you, but that little is enough to make me appreciate your character. I have never seen a woman more fair or more pure than you are, and if from this moment I take no more notice of you, forgive me; it is only because, on leaving this world, I do not wish to have any further regret."

Rosa felt a shudder creeping over her frame, for, whilst the prisoner pronounced these words, the belfry clock of the Buytenhof struck eleven.

Cornelius understood her. "Yes, yes, let us make haste," he said, "you are right, Rosa."

Then, taking the paper with the three suckers from his breast, where he had again put it, since he had no longer any fear of being searched, he said: "My dear girl, I have been very fond of flowers. That was at a time when I did not know that there was anything else to be loved. Don't blush, Rosa, nor turn away; and even if I were making you a declaration of love, alas! poor dear, it would be of no more consequence. Down there in the yard, there is an instrument of steel, which in sixty minutes will put an end to my boldness. Well, Rosa, I loved flowers dearly, and I have found, or at least I believe so, the secret of the great black tulip, which it has been considered impossible to grow, and for which, as you know, or may not know, a prize of a hundred thousand guilders has been offered by the Horticultural Society of Haarlem. These hundred thousand guilders — and Heaven knows I do not regret them — these hundred thousand guilders I have here in this paper; for they are won by the three bulbs wrapped up in it, which you may take, Rosa, as I make you a present of them."

"Mynheer Cornelius!"

"Yes, yes, Rosa, you may take them; you are not wronging any one, my child. I am alone in this world; my parents are dead; I never had a sister or a brother. I have never had a thought of loving any one with what is called love, and if any one has loved me, I have not known it. However, you see well, Rosa, that I am abandoned by everybody, as in this sad hour you alone are with me in my prison, consoling and assisting me."

"But, sir, a hundred thousand guilders!"

"Well, let us talk seriously, my dear child: those hundred thousand guilders will be a nice marriage portion, with your pretty face; you shall have them, Rosa, dear Rosa, and I ask nothing in return but your promise that you will marry a fine young man, whom you love, and who will love

you, as dearly as I loved my flowers. Don't interrupt me, Rosa, dear, I have only a few minutes more."

The poor girl was nearly choking with her sobs.

Cornelius took her by the hand.

"Listen to me," he continued: "I'll tell you how to manage it. Go to Dort and ask Butruysheim, my gardener, for soil from my border number six, fill a deep box with it, and plant in it these three bulbs. They will flower next May, that is to say, in seven months; and, when you see the flower forming on the stem, be careful at night to protect them from the wind, and by day to screen them from the sun. They will flower black; I am quite sure of it. You are then to apprise the President of the Haarlem Society. He will cause the color of the flower to be proved before a committee, and these hundred thousand guilders will be paid to you."

Rosa heaved a deep sigh.

"And now," continued Cornelius, — wiping away a tear which was glistening in his eye, and which was shed much more for that marvellous black tulip which he was not to see than for the life which he was about to lose, — "I have no wish left, except that the tulip should be called *Rosa Barlensis*, that is to say, that its name should combine yours and mine; and as, of course, you do not understand Latin, and might therefore forget this name, try to get for me pencil and paper, that I may write it down for you."

Rosa sobbed afresh, and handed to him a book, bound in shagreen, which bore the initials C. W.

"What is this?" asked the prisoner.

"Alas!" replied Rosa, "it is the Bible of your poor godfather, Cornelius de Witt. From it he derived strength to endure the torture, and to bear his sentence without flinching. I found it in this cell, after the death of the martyr, and have preserved it as a relic. To-day I brought it to you, for it seemed to me that this book must possess in itself a divine power. Write in it what you have to write, Mynheer Cornelius; and though, unfortunately, I am not

able to read, I will take care that what you write shall be accomplished."

Cornelius took the Bible, and kissed it reverently.

"With what shall I write?" asked Cornelius.

"There is a pencil in the Bible," said Rosa.

This was the pencil which John de Witt had lent to his brother, and which he had forgotten to take away with him.

Cornelius took it, and on the second fly leaf (for it will be remembered that the first was torn out), drawing near his end like his godfather, he wrote with a no less firm hand:—

"On this day, the 23d of August, 1672, being on the point of rendering, although innocent, my soul to God on the scaffold, I bequeath to Rosa Gryphus the only worldly goods which remain to me of all that I have possessed in this world, the rest having been confiscated; I bequeath, I say, to Rosa Gryphus three bulbs, which I am convinced must produce, in the next May, the Grand Black Tulip for which a prize of a hundred thousand guilders has been offered by the Haarlem Society, requesting that she may be paid the same sum in my stead, as my sole heiress, under the only condition of her marrying a respectable young man of about my age, who loves her, and whom she loves, and of her giving the black tulip, which will constitute a new species, the name of *Rosa Barlaensis*, that is to say, hers and mine combined.

"So may God grant me mercy, and to her health and long life!

"CORNELIUS VAN BAERLE."

The prisoner then, giving the Bible to Rosa, said,—

"Read."

"Alas!" she answered, "I have already told you I cannot read."

Cornelius then read to Rosa the testament that he had just made.

The agony of the poor girl almost overpowered her.

"Do you accept my conditions?" asked the prisoner, with a melancholy smile, kissing the trembling hands of the afflicted girl.

"Oh, I don't know, sir," she stammered.

"You don't know, child, and why not?"

"Because there is one condition which I am afraid I cannot keep."

"Which? I should have thought that all was settled between us."

"You give me the hundred thousand guilders as a marriage portion, don't you?"

"Yes."

"And under the condition of my marrying a man whom I love?"

"Certainly."

"Well, then, sir, this money cannot belong to me. I shall never love any one; neither shall I marry."

And, after having with difficulty uttered these words, Rosa almost swooned away in the violence of her grief.

Cornelius, frightened at seeing her so pale and sinking, was going to take her in his arms, when a heavy step, followed by other dismal sounds, was heard on the staircase, amidst the continued barking of the dog.

"They are coming to fetch you. Oh God! Oh God!" cried Rosa, wringing her hands. "And have you nothing more to tell me?"

She fell on her knees with her face buried in her hands, and became almost senseless.

"I have only to say, that I wish you to preserve these bulbs as a most precious treasure, and carefully to treat them according to the directions I have given you. Do it for my sake, and now farewell, Rosa."

"Yes, yes," she said, without raising her head, "I will do anything you bid me, except marrying," she added, in a low voice, "for that, oh! that is impossible for me."

She then put the cherished treasure next her beating heart.

The noise on the staircase which Cornelius and Rosa had heard was caused by the Recorder, who was coming for the prisoner. He was followed by the executioner, by the soldiers who were to form the guard round the scaffold, and by some curious hangers-on of the prison.

Cornelius, without showing any weakness, but likewise without any bravado, received them rather as friends than as persecutors, and quietly submitted to all those preparations which these men were obliged to make in performance of their duty.

Then, casting a glance into the yard through the narrow iron-barred window of his cell, he perceived the scaffold, and, at twenty paces distant from it, the gibbet, from which, by order of the Stadtholder, the outraged remains of the two brothers De Witt had been taken down.

When the moment came to descend in order to follow the guards, Cornelius sought with his eyes the angelic look of Rosa ; but he saw, behind the swords and halberds, only a form lying outstretched near a wooden bench, and a death-like face half covered with long golden locks.

But Rosa, whilst falling down senseless, still obeying her friend, had pressed her hand on her velvet bodice, and, forgetting everything in the world besides, instinctively grasped the precious deposit which Cornelius had intrusted to her care.

Leaving the cell, the young man could still see in the convulsively clinched fingers of Rosa the yellowish leaf from that Bible on which Cornelius de Witt had with such difficulty and pain written these few lines, which, if Van Baerle had read them, would undoubtedly have been the saving of a man and a tulip.

CHAPTER XII.

THE EXECUTION.

CORNELIUS had not three hundred paces to walk outside the prison to reach the foot of the scaffold. At the bottom of the staircase, the dog quietly looked at him whilst he was passing; Cornelius even fancied he saw in the eyes of the monster a certain expression as it were of compassion.

The dog perhaps knew the condemned prisoners, and only bit those who left as free men.

The shorter the way from the door of the prison to the foot of the scaffold, the more fully, of course, it was crowded with curious people.

These were the same who, not satisfied with the blood which they had shed three days before, were now craving for a new victim.

And scarcely had Cornelius made his appearance than a fierce groan ran through the whole street, spreading all over the yard, and re-echoing from the streets which led to the scaffold, and which were likewise crowded with spectators.

The scaffold indeed looked like an islet at the confluence of several rivers.

In the midst of these threats, groans, and yells, Cornelius, very likely in order not to hear them, had buried himself in his own thoughts.

And what did he think of in his last melancholy journey?

Neither of his enemies, nor of his judges, nor of his executioners.

He thought of the beautiful tulips which he would see from heaven above, at Ceylon, or Bengal, or elsewhere, when he would be able to look with pity on this earth,

where John and Cornelius de Witt had been murdered for having thought too much of politics, and where Cornelius van Baerle was about to be murdered for having thought too much of tulips.

"It is only one stroke of the axe," said the philosopher to himself, "and my beautiful dream will begin to be realised."

Only there was still a chance, just as it had happened before to M. de Chalais, to M. de Thou, and other slovenly executed people, that the headsman might inflict more than one stroke, that is to say, more than one martyrdom, on the poor tulip-fancier.

Yet, notwithstanding all this, Van Baerle mounted the scaffold not the less resolutely, proud of having been the friend of that illustrious John, and godson of that noble Cornelius de Witt, whom the ruffians, who were now crowding to witness his own doom, had torn to pieces and burnt three days before.

He knelt down, said his prayers, and observed, not without a feeling of sincere joy, that, laying his head on the block, and keeping his eyes open, he would be able to his last moment to see the grated window of the Buytenhof.

At length the fatal moment arrived, and Cornelius placed his chin on the cold damp block. But at this moment his eyes closed involuntarily, to receive more resolutely the terrible avalanche which was about to fall on his head, and to engulf his life.

A gleam like that of lightning passed across the scaffold: it was the executioner raising his sword.

Van Baerle bade farewell to the great black tulip, certain of awaking in another world full of light and glorious tints.

Three times he felt, with a shudder, the cold current of air from the knife near his neck, but what a surprise! he felt neither pain nor shock.

He saw no change in the colour of the sky, or of the world around him.

Then suddenly Van Baerle felt gentle hands raising him, and soon stood on his feet again, although trembling a little.

He looked around him. There was some one by his side, reading a large parchment, sealed with a huge seal of red wax.

And the same sun, yellow and pale, as it behooves a Dutch sun to be, was shining in the skies; and the same grated window looked down upon him from the Buytenhof; and the same rabble, no longer yelling, but completely thunderstruck, were staring at him from the streets below.

Van Baerle began to be sensible to what was going on around him.

His Highness, William, Prince of Orange, very likely afraid that Van Baerle's blood would turn the scale of judgment against him, had compassionately taken into consideration his good character, and the apparent proofs of his innocence.

His Highness, accordingly, had granted him his life.

Cornelius at first hoped that the pardon would be complete, and that he would be restored to his full liberty, and to his flower borders at Dort.

But Cornelius was mistaken. To use an expression of Madame de Sévigné, who wrote about the same time, "there was a postscript to the letter;" and the most important part of the letter was contained in the postscript.

In this postscript, William of Orange, Stadtholder of Holland, condemned Cornelius van Baerle to imprisonment for life. He was not sufficiently guilty to suffer death, but he was too much so to be set at liberty.

Cornelius heard this clause, but, the first feeling of vexation and disappointment over, he said to himself, —

"Never mind, all this is not lost yet; there is some good in this perpetual imprisonment; Rosa will be there, and also my three bulbs of the black tulip are there."

But Cornelius forgot that the Seven Provinces had seven prisons, one for each, and that the board of the prisoner is

anywhere else less expensive than at the Hague, which is a capital.

His Highness, who, as it seems, did not possess the means to feed Van Baerle at the Hague, sent him to undergo his perpetual imprisonment at the fortress of Loewestein, very near Dort, but, alas ! also very far from it ; for Loewestein, as the geographers tell us, is situated at the point of the islet which is formed by the confluence of the Waal and the Meuse, opposite Gorcum.

Van Baerle was sufficiently versed in the history of his country to know that the celebrated Grotius was confined in that castle after the death of Barneveldt ; and that the States, in their generosity to the illustrious publicist, jurist, historian, poet, and divine, had granted to him for his daily maintenance the sum of twenty-four stivers.

"I," said Van Baerle to himself, "I am worth much less than Grotius. They will hardly give me twelve stivers, and I shall live miserably ; but never mind, at all events I shall live."

Then suddenly a terrible thought struck him.

"Ah !" he exclaimed, "how damp and misty that part of the country is, and the soil so bad for the tulips ! And then Rosa will not be at Loewestein !"

CHAPTER XIII.

WHAT WAS GOING ON ALL THIS TIME IN THE MIND OF
ONE OF THE SPECTATORS.

WHILST Cornelius was engaged with his own thoughts, a coach had driven up to the scaffold. This vehicle was for the prisoner. He was invited to enter it, and he obeyed.

His last look was towards the Buytenhof. He hoped to see at the window the face of Rosa, brightening up again.

But the coach was drawn by good horses, who soon carried Van Baerle away from among the shouts which the rabble roared in honour of the most magnanimous Stadtholder, mixing with it a spice of abuse against the brothers De Witt and the godson of Cornelius, who had just now been saved from death.

This reprieve suggested to the worthy spectators remarks such as the following: —

“It’s very fortunate that we used such speed in having justice done to that great villain John, and to that little rogue Cornelius, otherwise his Highness might have snatched them from us, just as he has done this fellow.”

Among all the spectators whom Van Baerle’s execution had attracted to the Buytenhof, and whom the sudden turn of affairs had disagreeably surprised, undoubtedly the one most disappointed was a certain respectably dressed burgher, who from early morning had made such a good use of his feet and elbows that he at last was separated from the scaffold only by the file of soldiers which surrounded it.

Many had shown themselves eager to see the perfidious blood of the guilty Cornelius flow, but not one had shown such a keen anxiety as the individual just alluded to.

The most furious had come to the Buytenhof at day-break, to secure a better place; but he, outdoing even them, had passed the night at the threshold of the prison, from whence, as we have already said, he had advanced to the very foremost rank, *unguibus et rostro*, — that is to say, coaxing some, and kicking the others.

And when the executioner had conducted the prisoner to the scaffold, the burgher, who had mounted on the stone of the pump the better to see and be seen, made to the executioner a sign which meant, —

“It’s a bargain, is n’t it?”

The executioner answered by another sign, which was meant to say, —

“Be quiet, it’s all right.”

This burgher was no other than Mynheer Isaac Boxtel, who since the arrest of Cornelius had come to the Hague to try if he could not get hold of the three bulbs of the black tulip.

Boxtel had at first tried to gain over Gryphus to his interest, but the jailer had not only the snarling fierceness, but likewise the fidelity, of a dog. He had therefore bristled up at Boxtel’s hatred, whom he had suspected to be a warm friend of the prisoner, making trifling inquiries to contrive with the more certainty some means of escape for him.

Thus to the very first proposals which Boxtel made to Gryphus to filch the bulbs which Cornelius van Baerle must be supposed to conceal, if not in his breast, at least in some corner of his cell, the surly jailer had only answered by kicking Mynheer Isaac out, and setting the dog at him.

The piece which the mastiff had torn from his hose did not discourage Boxtel. He came back to the charge, but this time Gryphus was in bed, feverish, and with a broken arm. He therefore was not able to admit the petitioner, who then addressed himself to Rosa, offering to buy her a head-dress of pure gold if she would get the bulbs for him. On this, the generous girl, although not yet knowing the

value of the object of the robbery, which was to be so well remunerated, had directed the tempter to the executioner, as the heir of the prisoner.

In the mean while the sentence had been pronounced. Thus Isaac had no more time to bribe any one. He therefore clung to the idea which Rosa had suggested: he went to the executioner.

Isaac had not the least doubt that Cornelius would die with the bulbs on his heart.

But there were two things which Boxtel did not calculate upon: —

Rosa, that is to say, love ;

William of Orange, that is to say, clemency.

But for Rosa and William, the calculations of the envious neighbour would have been correct.

But for William, Cornelius would have died.

But for Rosa, Cornelius would have died with his bulbs on his heart.

Mynheer Boxtel went to the headsman, to whom he gave himself out as a great friend of the condemned man, and from whom he bought all the clothes of the dead man that was to be, for one hundred guilders; rather an exorbitant sum, as he engaged to leave all the trinkets of gold and silver to the executioner.

But what was the sum of a hundred guilders to a man who was all but sure to buy with it the prize of the Haarlem Society?

It was money lent at a thousand per cent, which, as nobody will deny, was a very handsome investment.

The headsman, on the other hand, had scarcely anything to do to earn his hundred guilders. He needed only, as soon as the execution was over, to allow Mynheer Boxtel to ascend the scaffold with his servants, to remove the inanimate remains of his friend.

The thing was, moreover, quite customary among the "faithful brethren," when one of their masters died a public death in the yard of the Buytenhof.

A fanatic like Cornelius might very easily have found another fanatic who would give a hundred guilders for his remains.

The executioner also readily acquiesced in the proposal, making only one condition, — that of being paid in advance.

Boxtel, like the people who enter a show at a fair, might be disappointed, and refuse to pay on going out.

Boxtel paid in advance, and waited.

After this the reader may imagine how excited Boxtel was; with what anxiety he watched the guards, the Recorder, and the executioner; and with what intense interest he surveyed the movements of Van Baerle. How would he place himself on the block? how would he fall? and would he not, in falling, crush those inestimable bulbs? had not he at least taken care to enclose them in a golden box, — as gold is the hardest of all metals?

Every trifling delay irritated him. Why did that stupid executioner thus lose time in brandishing his sword over the head of Cornelius, instead of cutting that head off?

But when he saw the Recorder take the hand of the condemned, and raise him, whilst drawing forth the parchment from his pocket, — when he heard the pardon of the Stadtholder publicly read out, — then Boxtel was no more like a human being; the rage and malice of the tiger, of the hyena, and of the serpent glistened in his eyes, and vented itself in his yell and his movements. Had he been able to get at Van Baerle, he would have pounced upon him and strangled him.

And so, then, Cornelius was to live, and was to go with him to Loewestein, and thither to his prison he would take with him his bulbs; and perhaps he would even find a garden where the black tulip would flower for him.

Boxtel, quite overcome by his frenzy, fell from the stone upon some Orangemen, who, like him, were sorely vexed at the turn which affairs had taken. They, mistaking the frantic cries of Mynheer Isaac for demonstrations of joy, began to belabour him with kicks and cuffs, such as could

not have been administered in better style by any prize-fighter on the other side of the Channel.

Blows were, however, nothing to him. He wanted to run after the coach which was carrying away Cornelius with his bulbs. But in his hurry he overlooked a paving-stone in his way, stumbled, lost his centre of gravity, rolled over to a distance of some yards, and only rose again, bruised and begrimed, after the whole rabble of the Hague, with their muddy feet, had passed over him.

One would think that this was enough for one day; but Mynheer Boxtel did not seem to think so, as, in addition to having his clothes torn, his back bruised, and his hands scratched, he inflicted upon himself the further punishment of tearing out his hair by handfuls, as an offering to that goddess of envy who, as mythology teaches us, wears a head-dress of serpents.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE PIGEONS OF DORT.

It was indeed in itself a great honour for Cornelius van Baerle to be confined in the same prison which had once received the learned master Grotius.

But on arriving at the prison he met with an honour even greater. As chance would have it, the cell formerly inhabited by the illustrious Barneveldt happened to be vacant, when the clemency of the Prince of Orange sent the tulip-fancier Van Baerle there.

The cell had a very bad character at the castle since the time when Grotius, by means of the device of his wife, made escape from it in that famous book-chest which the jailers forgot to examine.

On the other hand, it seemed to Van Baerle an auspicious omen that this very cell was assigned to him; for, according to his ideas, a jailer ought never to have given to a second pigeon the cage from which the first had so easily flown.

The cell had an historical character. We will only state here that, with the exception of an alcove which was contrived there for the use of Madame Grotius, it differed in no respect from the other cells of the prison; only, perhaps, it was a little higher, and had a splendid view from the grated window.

Cornelius felt himself perfectly indifferent as to the place where he had to lead an existence which was little more than vegetation. There were only two things now for which he cared, and the possession of which was a happiness enjoyed only in imagination.

A flower, and a woman; both of them, as he conceived, lost to him for ever.

Fortunately the good doctor was mistaken. In his prison cell the most adventurous life which ever fell to the lot of any tulip-fancier was reserved for him.

One morning, whilst at his window inhaling the fresh air which came from the river, and casting a longing look to the windmills of his dear old city Dort, which were looming in the distance behind a forest of chimneys, he saw flocks of pigeons coming from that quarter to perch fluttering on the pointed gables of Loewestein.

These pigeons, Van Baerle said to himself, are coming from Dort, and consequently may return there. By fastening a little note to the wing of one of these pigeons, one might have a chance to send a message there. Then, after a few moments' consideration, he exclaimed, —

“I will do it.”

A man grows very patient who is twenty-eight years of age, and condemned to a prison for life, — that is to say, to something like twenty two or twenty-three thousand days of captivity.

Van Baerle, from whose thoughts the three bulbs were never absent, made a snare for catching the pigeons, baiting the birds with all the resources of his kitchen, such as it was for eight stivers (sixpence English) a day; and, after a month of unsuccessful attempts, he at last caught a female bird.

It cost him two more months to catch a male bird; he then shut them up together, and having about the beginning of the year 1673 obtained some eggs from them, he released the female, which, leaving the male behind to hatch the eggs in her stead, flew joyously to Dort, with the note under her wing.

She returned in the evening. She had preserved the note.

Thus it went on for fifteen days, at first to the disappointment, and then to the great grief, of Van Baerle.

On the sixteenth day, at last, she came back without it.

Van Baerle had addressed it to his nurse, the old Frisian woman; and implored any charitable soul who might find it to convey it to her as safely and as speedily as possible.

In this letter there was a little note enclosed for Rosa.

Van Baerle's nurse had received the letter in the following way.

Leaving Dort, Mynheer Isaac Boxtel had abandoned, not only his house, his servants, his observatory, and his telescope, but also his pigeons.

The servant, having been left without wages, first lived on his little savings, and then on his master's pigeons.

Seeing this, the pigeons emigrated from the roof of Isaac Boxtel to that of Cornelius van Baerle.

The nurse was a kind-hearted woman, who could not live without something to love. She conceived an affection for the pigeons which had thrown themselves on her hospitality; and when Boxtel's servant reclaimed them with culinary intentions, having eaten the first fifteen already, and now wishing to eat the other fifteen, she offered to buy them from him for a consideration of six stivers per head.

This being just double their value, the man was very glad to close the bargain, and the nurse found herself in undisputed possession of the pigeons of her master's envious neighbour.

In the course of their wanderings, these pigeons with others visited the Hague, Loewestein, and Rotterdam, seeking variety, doubtless, in the flavour of their wheat or hempseed.

Chance, or rather God, for we can see the hand of God in everything, had willed that Cornelius van Baerle should happen to hit upon one of these very pigeons.

Therefore, if the envious wretch had not left Dort to follow his rival to the Hague in the first place, and then to Gorcum or to Loewestein,—for the two places are separated only by the confluence of the Waal and the Meuse, — Van Baerle's letter would have fallen into his hands and not the nurse's: in which even the poor prisoner, like the raven of the Roman cobbler, would have thrown away his time, his

trouble, and, instead of having to relate the series of exciting events which are about to flow from beneath our pen like the varied hues of a many-coloured tapestry, we should have naught to describe but a weary waste of days, dull and melancholy and gloomy as night's dark mantle.

The note, as we have said, had reached Van Baerle's nurse.

And also it came to pass, that one evening in the beginning of February, just when the stars were beginning to twinkle, Cornelius heard on the staircase of the little turret a voice which thrilled through him.

He put his hand on his heart, and listened.

It was the sweet harmonious voice of Rosa.

Let us confess it, Cornelius was not so stupefied with surprise, or so beyond himself with joy, as he would have been but for the pigeon, which, in answer to his letter, had brought back hope to him under her empty wing; and, knowing Rosa, he expected, if the note had ever reached her, to hear of her whom he loved, and also of his three darling bulbs.

He rose, listened once more, and bent forward towards the door.

Yes, they were indeed the accents which had fallen so sweetly on his heart at the Hague.

The question now was, whether Rosa, who had made the journey from the Hague to Loewestein, and who — Cornelius did not understand how — had succeeded even in penetrating into the prison, would also be fortunate enough in penetrating to the prisoner himself.

Whilst Cornelius, debating this point within himself, was building all sorts of castles in the air, and was struggling between hope and fear, the shutter of the grating in the door opened, and Rosa, beaming with joy, and beautiful in her pretty national costume — but still more beautiful from the grief which for the last five months had blanched her cheeks — pressed her little face against the wire grating of the window, saying to him, —

“Oh, sir, sir! here I am!”

Cornelius stretched out his arms, and, looking to heaven, uttered a cry of joy, —

“Oh, Rosa, Rosa!”

“Hush! let us speak low: my father follows on my heels,” said the girl.

“Your father?”

“Yes, he is in the courtyard at the bottom of the staircase, receiving the instructions of the Governor; he will presently come up.”

“The instructions of the Governor?”

“Listen to me, I’ll try to tell you all in a few words. The Stadtholder has a country-house, one league distant from Leyden, properly speaking a kind of large dairy, and my aunt, who was his nurse, has the management of it. As soon as I received your letter, which, alas! I could not read myself, but which your housekeeper read to me, I hastened to my aunt; there I remained until the Prince should come to the dairy; and when he came, I asked him as a favour to allow my father to exchange his post at the prison of the Hague with the jailer of the fortress of Loewestein. The Prince could not have suspected my object; had he known it, he would have refused my request, but as it is he granted it.”

“And so, you are here?”

“As you see.”

“And thus I shall see you every day?”

“As often as I can manage it.”

“Oh, Rosa, my beautiful Rosa, do you love me a little?”

“A little?” she said, “you make no great pretensions, Mynheer Cornelius.”

Cornelius tenderly stretched out his hands towards her, but they were only able to touch each other with the tips of their fingers through the wire grating.

“Here is my father,” said she.

Rosa then abruptly drew back from the door, and ran to meet old Gryphus, who made his appearance at the top of the staircase.

CHAPTER XV.

THE LITTLE GRATED WINDOW.

Gryphus was followed by the mastiff.

The turnkey took the animal round the jail, so that, if needs be, he might recognize the prisoners.

"Father," said Rosa, "here is the famous prison from which Mynheer Grotius escaped. You know Mynheer Grotius?"

"Oh, yes, that rogue Grotius; a friend of that villain Barneveldt, whom I saw executed when I was a child. Ah! so Grotius; and that's the chamber from which he escaped. Well, I'll answer for it that no one shall escape after him in my time."

And thus opening the door, he began in the dark to talk to the prisoner.

The dog, on his part, went up to the prisoner, and, growling, smelled about his legs just as though to ask him what right he had still to be alive, after having left the prison in the company of the Recorder and the executioner.

But the fair Rosa called him to her side.

"Well, my master," said Gryphus, holding up his lantern to throw a little light around, "you see in me your new jailer. I am head turnkey, and have all the cells under my care. I am not vicious, but I'm not to be trifled with, as far as discipline goes."

"My good Master Gryphus, I know you perfectly well," said the prisoner, approaching within the circle of light cast around by the lantern.

"Halloa! that's you, Mynheer van Baerle," said Gryphus. "That's you; well, I declare, it's astonishing how people do meet."

"Oh, yes; and it's really a great pleasure to me, good Master Gryphus, to see that your arm is doing well, as you are able to hold your lantern with it."

Gryphus knitted his brow. "Now, that's just it," he said; "people always make blunders in politics. His Highness has granted you your life; I'm sure I should never have done so."

"Don't say so," replied Cornelius; "why not?"

"Because you are the very man to conspire again. You learned people have dealings with the devil."

"Nonsense, Master Gryphus. Are you dissatisfied with the manner in which I have set your arm, or with the price that I asked you?" said Cornelius, laughing.

"On the contrary," growled the jailer, "you have set it only too well. There is some witchcraft in this. After six weeks, I was able to use it as if nothing had happened; so much so, that the doctor of the Buytenhof, who knows his trade well, wanted to break it again, to set it in the regular way, and promised me that I should have my blessed three months for my money before I should be able to move it."

"And you did not want that?"

"I said, 'Nay, as long as I can make the sign of the cross with that arm,' (Gryphus was a Roman Catholic,) 'I laugh at the devil.'"

"But if you laugh at the devil, Master Gryphus, you ought with so much more reason to laugh at learned people."

"Ah, learned people, learned people! Why, I would rather have to guard ten soldiers than one scholar. The soldiers smoke, guzzle, and get drunk; they are gentle as lambs if you only give them brandy or Moselle; but scholars, and drink, smoke, and fuddle—ah, yes, that's altogether different. They keep sober, spend nothing, and have their heads always clear to make conspiracies. But I tell you, at the very outset, it won't be such an easy matter for you to conspire. First of all, you will have no

books, no paper, and no conjuring book. It's books that helped Mynheer Grotius to get off."

"I assure you, Master Gryphus," replied Van Baerle, "that if I have entertained the idea of escaping, I most decidedly have it no longer."

"Well, well," said Gryphus, "just look sharp: that's what I shall do also. But, for all that, I say his Highness has made a great mistake."

"Not to have cut off my head? thank you, Master Gryphus."

"Just so, look whether the Mynheer de Witt don't keep very quiet now."

"That's very shocking what you say now, Master Gryphus," cried Van Baerle, turning away his head to conceal his disgust. "You forget that one of those unfortunate gentlemen was my friend, and the other my second father."

"Yes, but I also remember that the one, as well as the other, was a conspirator. And, moreover, I am speaking from Christian charity."

"Oh, indeed! explain that a little to me, my good Master Gryphus. I do not quite understand it."

"Well, then, if you had remained on the block of Master Harbruck —"

"What?"

"You would not suffer any longer; whereas, I will not disguise it from you, I shall lead you a sad life of it."

"Thank you for the promise, Master Gryphus."

And whilst the prisoner smiled ironically at the old jailer, Rosa, from the outside, answered by a bright smile, which carried sweet consolation to the heart of Van Baerle.

Gryphus stepped towards the window.

It was still light enough to see, although indistinctly, through the gray haze of the evening, the vast expanse of the horizon.

"What view has one from here?" asked Gryphus.

"Why, a very fine and pleasant one," said Cornelius, looking at Rosa.

"Yes, yes, too much of a view, too much."

And at this moment the two pigeons, scared by the sight and especially by the voice of the stranger, left their nest, and disappeared, quite frightened in the evening mist.

"Halloa! what's this?" cried Gryphus.

"My pigeons," answered Cornelius.

"Your pigeons," cried the jailer, "your pigeons! has a prisoner anything of his own?"

"Why, then," said Cornelius, "the pigeons which a merciful Father in Heaven has lent to me."

"So, here we have a breach of the rules already," replied Gryphus. "Pigeons! ah, young man, young man! I'll tell you one thing, that before to-morrow is over, your pigeons will boil in my pot."

"First of all you should catch them, Master Gryphus. You won't allow these pigeons to be mine! Well, I vow they are even less yours than mine."

"Omittance is no acquittance," growled the jailer, "and I shall certainly wring their necks before twenty-four hours are over: you may be sure of that."

Whilst giving utterance to this ill-natured promise, Gryphus put his head out of the window to examine the nest. This gave Van Baerle time to run to the door, and squeeze the hand of Rosa, who whispered to him,—

"At nine o'clock this evening."

Gryphus, quite taken up with the desire of catching the pigeons next day, as he had promised he would do, saw and heard nothing of this short interlude; and, after having closed the window, he took the arm of his daughter, left the cell, turned the key twice, drew the bolts, and went off to make the same kind promise to the other prisoners.

He had scarcely withdrawn, when Cornelius went to the door to listen to the sound of his footsteps, and, as soon as they had died away, he ran to the window, and completely demolished the nest of the pigeons.

Rather than expose them to the tender mercies of his bullying jailer, he drove away for ever those gentle mes-

sengers to whom he owed the happiness of having seen Rosa again.

This visit of the jailer, his brutal threats, and the gloomy prospect of the harshness with which, as he had before experienced, Gryphus watched his prisoners, — all this was unable to extinguish in Cornelius the sweet thoughts, and especially the sweet hope, which the presence of Rosa had reawakened in his heart.

He waited eagerly to hear the clock of the tower of Loewestein strike nine.

The last chime was still vibrating through the air, when Cornelius heard on the staircase the light step and the rustle of the flowing dress of the fair Frisian maid, and soon after a light appeared at the little grated window in the door, on which the prisoner fixed his earnest gaze.

The shutter opened on the outside.

"Here I am," said Rosa, out of breath from running up the stairs, "here I am."

"Oh, my good Rosa."

"You are then glad to see me?"

"Can you ask? But how did you contrive to get here? tell me."

"Now listen to me. My father falls asleep every evening almost immediately after his supper; I then make him lie down, a little stupefied with his gin. Don't say anything about it, because, thanks to this nap, I shall be able to come every evening and chat for an hour with you."

"Oh, I thank you, Rosa, dear Rosa."

Saying these words, Cornelius put his face so near the little window that Rosa withdrew hers.

"I have brought back to you your bulbs."

Cornelius's heart leaped with joy. He had not yet dared to ask Rosa what she had done with the precious treasure which he had intrusted to her.

"Oh, you have preserved them, then?"

"Did you not give them to me as a thing which was dear to you?"

"Yes, but as I have given them to you, it seems to me that they belong to you."

"They would have belonged to me after your death, but, fortunately, you are alive now. Oh how I blessed his Highness in my heart! If God grants to him all the happiness that I have wished him, certainly Prince William will be the happiest man on earth. When I looked at the Bible of your godfather Cornelius, I was resolved to bring back to you your bulbs, only I did not know how to accomplish it. I had, however, already formed the plan of going to the Stadtholder, to ask from him for my father the appointment of jailer of Loewestein, when your housekeeper brought me your letter. Oh, how we wept together! But your letter only confirmed me the more in my resolution. I then left for Leyden, and the rest you know."

"What, my dear Rosa, you thought, even before receiving my letter, of coming to meet me again?"

"If I thought of it," said Rosa, allowing her love to get the better of her bashfulness, "I thought of nothing else."

And, saying these words, Rosa looked so exceedingly pretty, that for the second time Cornelius placed his forehead and lips against the wire grating; of course, we must presume with the laudable desire to thank the young lady.

Rosa, however, drew back as before.

"In truth," she said, with that coquetry which somehow or other is in the heart of every young girl, "I have often been sorry that I am not able to read, but never so much so as when your housekeeper brought me your letter. I kept the paper in my hands, which spoke to other people, and which was dumb to poor stupid me."

"So you have often regretted not being able to read," said Cornelius. "I should just like to know on what occasions."

"Troth," she said, laughing, "to read all the letters which were written to me."

"Oh, you received letters, Rosa?"

"By hundreds."

"But who wrote to you?"

"Who! why, in the first place, all the students who passed over the Buytenhof, all the officers who went to parade, all the clerks, and even the merchants who saw me at my little window."

"And what did you do with all these notes, my dear Rosa?"

"Formerly," she answered, "I got some friend to read them to me, which was capital fun; but since a certain time — well, what use is it to attend to all this nonsense? — since a certain time I have burnt them."

"Since a certain time!" exclaimed Cornelius, with a look beaming with love and joy.

Rosa cast down her eyes, blushing. In her sweet confusion, she did not observe the lips of Cornelius, which, alas! only met the cold wire-grating. Yet, in spite of this obstacle, they communicated to the lips of the young girl the glowing breath of the most tender kiss.

At this sudden outburst of tenderness, Rosa grew very pale, — perhaps paler than she had been on the day of the execution. She uttered a plaintive sob, closed her fine eyes, and fled, trying in vain to still the beating of her heart.

And thus Cornelius was again alone.

Rosa had fled so precipitately, that she completely forgot to return to Cornelius the three bulbs of the Black Tulip.

CHAPTER XVI.

MASTER AND PUPIL.

THE worthy Master Gryphus, as the reader may have seen, was far from sharing the kindly feeling of his daughter for the godson of Cornelius de Witt.

There being only five prisoners at Loewestein, the post of turnkey was not a very onerous one, but rather a sort of sinecure, given after a long period of service.

But the worthy jailer, in his zeal, had magnified with all the power of his imagination the importance of his office. To him Cornelius had swelled to the gigantic proportions of a criminal of the first order. He looked upon him, therefore, as the most dangerous of all his prisoners. He watched all his steps, and always spoke to him with an angry countenance; punishing him for what he called his dreadful rebellion against such a clement prince as the Stadtholder.

Three times a day he entered Van Baerle's cell, expecting to find him trespassing; but Cornelius had ceased to correspond, since his correspondent was at hand. It is even probable that, if Cornelius had obtained his full liberty, with permission to go wherever he liked, the prison, *with* Rosa and his bulbs, would have appeared to him preferable to any other habitation in the world without Rosa and his bulbs.

Rosa, in fact, had promised to come and see him every evening, and from the first evening she had kept her word.

On the following evening she went up as before, with the same mysteriousness and the same precaution. Only she had this time resolved within herself not to approach too near the grating. In order, however, to engage Van

Baerle in a conversation from the very first which would seriously occupy his attention, she tendered to him through the grating the three bulbs, which were still wrapped up in the same paper.

But to the great astonishment of Rosa, Van Baerle pushed back her white hand with the tips of his fingers.

The young man had been considering about the matter.

"Listen to me," he said. "I think we should risk too much by embarking our whole fortune in one ship. Only think, my dear Rosa, that the question is to carry out an enterprise which until now has been considered impossible, namely, that of making the great black tulip flower. Let us, therefore, take every possible precaution, so that in case of a failure we may not have anything to reproach ourselves with. I will now tell you the way I have traced out for us."

Rosa was all attention to what he would say, much more on account of the importance which the unfortunate tulip-fancier attached to it, than that she felt interested in the matter herself.

"I will explain to you Rosa," he said. "I dare say you have in this fortress a small garden, or some court-yard, or, if not that, at least some terrace."

"We have a very fine garden," said Rosa, "it runs along the edge of the Waal, and is full of fine old trees."

"Could you bring me some soil from the garden, that I may judge?"

"I will do so to-morrow."

"Take some from a sunny spot, and some from a shady, so that I may judge of its properties in a dry and in a moist state."

"Be assured I shall."

"After having chosen the soil, and, if it be necessary, modified it, we will divide our three bulbs; you will take one and plant it, on the day that I will tell you, in the soil chosen by me. It is sure to flower, if you tend it according to my directions."

"I will not lose sight of it for a minute."

"You will give me another, which I will try to grow here in my cell, and which will help me to beguile those long weary hours when I cannot see you. I confess to you I have very little hope for the latter one, and I look beforehand on this unfortunate bulb as sacrificed to my selfishness. However, the sun sometimes visits me. I will, besides, try to convert everything into an artificial help, even the heat and the ashes of my pipe; and lastly, we, or rather you, will keep in reserve the third sucker as our last resource, in case our first two experiments should prove a failure. In this manner, my dear Rosa, it is impossible that we should not succeed in gaining the hundred thousand guilders for your marriage portion; and how dearly shall we enjoy that supreme happiness of seeing our work brought to a successful issue!"

"I know it all now," said Rosa. "I will bring you the soil to-morrow, and you will choose it for your bulb and for mine. As to that in which yours is to grow, I shall have several journeys to convey it to you, as I cannot bring much at a time."

"There is no hurry for it, dear Rosa; our tulips need not be put into the ground for a month at least. So you see we have plenty of time before us. Only I hope that, in planting your bulb, you will strictly follow all my instructions."

"I promise you I will."

"And when you have once planted it, you will communicate to me all the circumstances which may interest our nursling; such as change of weather, footprints on the walks, or footprints in the borders. You will listen at night whether our garden is not resorted to by cats. A couple of those untoward animals laid waste two of my borders at Dort."

"I will listen."

"On moonlight nights have you ever looked at your garden, my dear child?"

"The window of my sleeping-room overlooks it."

"Well, on moonlight nights you will observe whether any rats come out from the holes in the wall. The rats are most mischievous by their gnawing everything; and I have heard unfortunate tulip-growers complain most bitterly of Noah for having put a couple of rats in the ark."

"I will observe, and if there are cats or rats —"

"You will apprise me of it, — that's right. And, moreover," Van Baerle, having become mistrustful in his captivity, continued, "there is an animal much more to be feared than even the cat or the rat."

"What animal?"

"Man. You comprehend, my dear Rosa, a man may steal a guilder, and risk the prison for such a trifle, and, consequently, it is much more likely that some one might steal a hundred thousand guilders."

"No one ever enters the garden but myself."

"Thank you, thank you, my dear Rosa. All the joy of my life has still to come from you."

And as the lips of Van Baerle approached the grating with the same ardor as the day before, and as, moreover, the hour for retiring had struck, Rosa drew back her head, and stretched out her hand.

In this pretty little hand, of which the coquettish damsel was particularly proud, was the bulb.

Cornelius kissed most tenderly the tips of her fingers. Did he do so because the hand kept one of the bulbs of the great black tulip, or because this hand was Rosa's? We shall leave this point to the decision of wiser heads than ours.

Rosa withdrew with the other two suckers, pressing them to her heart.

Did she press them to her heart because they were the bulbs of the great black tulip, or because she had them from Cornelius?

This point, we believe, might be more readily decided than the other.

However that may have been, from that moment life became sweet, and again full of interest to the prisoner.

Rosa, as we have seen, had returned to him one of the suckers.

Every evening she brought to him, handful by handful, a quantity of soil from that part of the garden which he had found to be the best, and which, indeed, was excellent.

A large jug, which Cornelius had skilfully broken, did service as a flower-pot. He half filled it, and mixed the earth of the garden with a small portion of dried river mud; a mixture which formed an excellent soil.

Then, at the beginning of April, he planted his first sucker in that jug.

Not a day passed on which Rosa did not come to have her chat with Cornelius.

The tulips, concerning whose cultivation Rosa was taught all the mysteries of the art, formed the principal topic of the conversation; but, interesting as the subject was, people cannot always talk about tulips.

They therefore began to chat also about other things, and the tulip-fancier found out to his great astonishment what a vast range of subjects a conversation may comprise.

Only Rosa had made it a habit to keep her pretty face invariably six inches distant from the grating, having perhaps become distrustful of herself.

There was one thing especially which gave Cornelius almost as much anxiety as his bulbs—a subject to which he always returned—the dependence of Rosa on her father.

Indeed, Van Baerle's happiness depended on the whim of this man. He might one day find Loewestein dull, or the air of the place unhealthy, or the gin bad, and leave the fortress, and take his daughter with him, when Cornelius and Rosa would again be separated.

"Of what use would the carrier pigeons then be?" said Cornelius to Rosa, "as you, my dear girl, would not be able to read what I should write to you, nor to write to me your thoughts in return."

"Well," answered Rosa, who in her heart was as much afraid of a separation as Cornelius himself, "we have one hour every evening; let us make good use of it."

"I don't think we make such a bad use of it as it is."

"Let us employ it even better," said Rosa, smiling. "Teach me to read and write. I shall make the best of your lessons, believe me; and, in this way, we shall never be separated any more, except by our own will."

"Oh, then, we have an eternity before us," said Cornelius.

Rosa smiled, and quietly shrugged her shoulders.

"Will you remain for ever in prison?" she said, "and after having granted you your life, will not his Highness also grant you your liberty? And will you not then recover your fortune, and be a rich man; and then, when you are driving in your own coach, riding your own horse, will you still look at poor Rosa, the daughter of a jailer, scarcely better than a hangman?"

Cornelius tried to contradict her, and certainly he would have done so with all his heart, and with all the sincerity of a soul full of love.

She, however, smilingly interrupted him, saying, "How is your tulip going on?"

To speak to Cornelius of his tulip was an expedient resorted to by her to make him forget everything, even Rosa herself.

"Very well, indeed," he said, "the coat is growing black, the sprouting has commenced, the veins of the bulb are swelling; in eight days hence, and perhaps sooner, we may distinguish the first buds of the leaves protruding. And yours, Rosa?"

"Oh, I have done things on a large scale, and according to your directions."

"Now, let me hear, Rosa, what you have done," said Cornelius, with as tender an anxiety as he had lately shown to herself.

"Well," she said, smiling, for in her own heart she could not help studying this double love of the prisoner for her-

self and for the black tulip, "I have done things on a large scale; I have prepared a bed as you described it to me, on a clear spot, far from trees and walls, in a soil slightly mixed with sand, rather moist than dry, without a fragment of stone or pebble."

"Well done, Rosa, well done."

"I am now only waiting for your further orders to put in the bulb; you know that I must be behind hand with you, as I have in my favour all the chances of good air, of the sun, and abundance of moisture."

"All true, all true," exclaimed Cornelius, clapping his hands with joy, "you are a good pupil, Rosa, and you are sure to gain your hundred thousand guilders."

"Don't forget," said Rosa, smiling, "that your pupil, as you call me, has still other things to learn besides the cultivation of tulips."

"Yes, yes, and I am as anxious as you are, Rosa, that you should learn to read."

"When shall we begin?"

"At once."

"No, to-morrow."

"Why to-morrow?"

"Because to-day our hour is expired, and I must leave you."

"Already? But what shall we read?"

"Oh," said Rosa, "I have a book,—a book which I hope will bring us luck."

"To-morrow, then."

"Yes, to-morrow."

On the following evening Rosa returned with the Bible of Cornelius de Witt.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE FIRST BULB.

ON the following evening, as we have said, Rosa returned with the Bible of Cornelius de Witt.

Then began between the master and the pupil one of those charming scenes which are the delight of the novelist who has to describe them.

The grated window, the only opening through which the two lovers were able to communicate, was too high for conveniently reading a book, although it had been quite convenient for them to read each other's faces.

Rosa therefore had to press the open book against the grating edgewise, holding above it in her right hand the lamp, but Cornelius hit upon the lucky idea of fixing it to the bars, so as to afford her a little rest. Rosa was then enabled to follow with her finger the letters and syllables, which she was to spell for Cornelius, who with a straw pointed out the letters to his attentive pupil through the holes of the grating.

The light of the lamp illuminated the rich complexion of Rosa, her blue liquid eyes, and her golden hair under her head-dress of gold brocade, with her fingers held up, and showing in the blood, as it flowed downwards in the veins, that pale pink hue which shines before the light, owing to the living transparency of the flesh tint.

Rosa's intellect rapidly developed itself under the animating influence of Cornelius, and when the difficulties seemed too arduous, the sympathy of two loving hearts seemed to smooth them away.

And Rosa, after having returned to her room, repeated in her solitude the reading lessons, and at the same time

recalled all the delight which she had felt whilst receiving them.

One evening she came half an hour later than usual. This was too extraordinary an instance not to call forth at once Cornelius's inquiries after its cause.

"Oh! do not be angry with me," she said, "it is not my fault. My father has renewed an acquaintance with an old crony who used to visit him at the Hague, and to ask him to let him see the prison. He is a good sort of fellow, fond of his bottle, tells funny stories, and moreover is very free with his money, so as always to be ready to stand a treat."

"You don't know anything further of him?" asked Cornelius, surprised.

"No," she answered; "it's only for about a fortnight that my father has taken such a fancy to this friend who is so assiduous in visiting him."

"Ah, so," said Cornelius, shaking his head uneasily, as every new incident seemed to him to forebode some catastrophe; "very likely some spy, one of those who are sent into jails to watch both prisoners and their keepers."

"I don't believe that," said Rosa, smiling; "if that worthy person is spying after any one, it is certainly not after my father."

"After whom, then?"

"Me, for instance."

"You?"

"Why not?" said Rosa, smiling.

"Ah, that's true," Cornelius observed, with a sigh. "You will not always have suitors in vain; this man may become your husband."

"I don't say anything to the contrary."

"What cause have you to entertain such a happy prospect?"

"Rather say, this fear, Mynheer Cornelius."

"Thank you, Rosa, you are right; well, I will say, then, this fear?"

"I have only this reason —"

"Tell me, I am anxious to hear."

"This man came several times before to the Buytenhof, at the Hague. I remember now, it was just about the time when you were confined there. When I left, he left too; when I came here, he came after me. At the Hague his pretext was that he wanted to see you."

"See me?"

"Yes, it must have undoubtedly been only a pretext; for now, when he could plead the same reason, as you are my father's prisoner again, he does not care any longer for you; quite the contrary, — I heard him say to my father only yesterday that he did not know you."

"Go on, Rosa, pray do, that I may guess who that man is, and what he wants."

"Are you quite sure, Mynheer Cornelius, that none of your friends can interest himself for you?"

"I have no friends, Rosa; I have only my old nurse, whom you know, and who knows you. Alas, poor Sue! she would come herself, and use no roundabout ways. She would at once say to your father, or to you, 'My good sir, or my good miss, my child is here; see how grieved I am; let me see him only for one hour, and I'll pray for you as long as I live.' No, no," continued Cornelius; "with the exception of my poor old Sue, I have no friends in this world."

"Then I come back to what I thought before; and the more so as last evening at sunset, whilst I was arranging the border where I am to plant your bulb, I saw a shadow gliding between the alder trees and the aspens. I did not appear to see him, but it was this man. He concealed himself and saw me digging the ground, and certainly it was *me* whom he followed, and *me* whom he was spying after. I could not move my rake, or touch one atom of soil, without his noticing it."

"Oh, yes, yes, he is in love with you," said Cornelius. "Is he young? Is he handsome?"

Saying this he looked anxiously at Rosa, eagerly waiting for her answer.

"Young? handsome?" cried Rosa, bursting into a laugh. "He is hideous to look at; crooked, nearly fifty years of age, and never dares to look me in the face, or to speak, except in an undertone."

"And his name?"

"Jacob Gisels."

"I don't know him."

"Then you see that, at all events, he does not come after you."

"At any rate, if he loves you, Rosa, which is very likely, as to see you is to love you, at least you don't love him."

"To be sure I don't."

"Then you wish me to keep my mind easy?"

"I should certainly ask you to do so."

"Well, then, now as you begin to know how to read, you will read all that I write to you of the pangs of jealousy and of absence, won't you, Rosa?"

"I shall read it, if you write with good big letters."

Then, as the turn which the conversation took began to make Rosa uneasy, she asked, —

"By the bye, how is your tulip going on?"

"Oh, Rosa, only imagine my joy; this morning I looked at it in the sun, and after having moved the soil aside which covers the bulb, I saw the first sprouting of the leaves. This small germ has caused me a much greater emotion than the order of his Highness which turned aside the sword already raised at the Buytenhof."

"You hope, then?" said Rosa, smiling.

"Yes, yes, I hope."

"And I, in my turn, when shall I plant my bulb?"

"Oh, the first favourable day I will tell you; but, whatever you do, let nobody help you, and don't confide your secret to any one in the world; do you see, a connoisseur by merely looking at the bulb would be able to distinguish its value; and so, my dearest Rosa, be careful in locking up the third sucker which remains to you."

"It is still wrapped up in the same paper in which you put it, and just as you gave it me. I have laid it at the bottom of my chest under my point lace, which keeps it dry, without pressing upon it. But good night, my poor captive gentleman."

"How? already?"

"It must be, it must be."

"Coming so late and going so soon."

"My father might grow impatient not seeing me return, and that precious lover might suspect a rival."

Here she listened uneasily.

"What is it?" asked Van Baerle.

"I thought I heard something."

"What, then?"

"Something like a step, creaking on the staircase."

"Surely," said the prisoner, "that cannot be Master Gryphus, he is always heard at a distance."

"No, it is not my father, I am quite sure, but —"

"But?"

"But it might be Mynheer Jacob."

Rosa rushed toward the staircase, and a door was really heard rapidly to close before the young damsel had got down the first ten steps.

Cornelius was very uneasy about it, but it was after all only a prelude to greater anxieties.

The following day passed without any remarkable incident. Gryphus made his three visits, and discovered nothing. He never came at the same hours, as he hoped thus to discover the secrets of the prisoner. Van Baerle, therefore, had devised a contrivance, a sort of pulley, by means of which he was able to lower or to raise his jug below the ledge of tiles and stone before his window. The strings by which this was effected he had found means to cover with that moss which generally grows on tiles, or in the crannies of the walls.

Gryphus suspected nothing, and the device succeeded for eight days. One morning, however, when Cornelius, ab-

sorbed in the contemplation of his bulb, from which a germ of vegetation was already peeping forth, had not heard old Gryphus coming up stairs as a gale of wind was blowing which shook the whole tower, the door suddenly opened.

Gryphus, perceiving an unknown and consequently a forbidden object in the hands of his prisoner, pounced upon it, with the same rapidity as the hawk on its prey.

As ill luck would have it, his coarse, hard hand, the same which he had broken, and which Cornelius van Baerle had set so well, grasped at once in the midst of the jug, on the spot where the bulb was lying in the soil.

"What have you got here?" he roared. "Ah! have I caught you?" and with this, he grabbed in the soil.

"I? nothing, nothing," cried Cornelius, trembling.

"Ah! have I caught you? a jug and earth in it! There is some criminal secret at the bottom of all this."

"Oh, my good Master Gryphus," said Van Baerle, imploringly, and anxious as the partridge robbed of her young by the reaper.

In fact, Gryphus was begining to dig the soil with his crooked fingers.

"Take care, sir, take care," said Cornelius, growing quite pale.

"Care of what? Zounds! of what?" roared the jailer.

"Take care, I say, you will crush it, Master Gryphus."

And with a rapid and almost frantic movement he snatched the jug from the hands of Gryphus, and hid it like a treasure under his arms.

But Gryphus, obstinate, like an old man, and more and more convinced that he was discovering here a conspiracy against the Prince of Orange, rushed up to his prisoner, raising his stick; seeing, however, the impassible resolution of the captive to protect his flower-pot, he was convinced that Cornelius trembled much less for his head than for his jug.

He therefore tried to wrest it from him by force.

"Halloa!" said the jailer, furious, "here, you see, you are rebelling."

"Leave me my tulip," cried Van Baerle.

"Ah, yes, tulip," replied the old man, "we know well the shifts of prisoners."

"But I vow to you —"

"Let go," repeated Gryphus, stamping his foot, "let go, or I shall call the guard."

"Call whoever you like, but you shall not have this flower except with my life."

Gryphus, exasperated, plunged his finger a second time into the soil, and now he drew out the bulb, which certainly looked quite black; and whilst Van Baerle, quite happy to have saved the vessel, did not suspect that the adversary had possessed himself of its precious contents, Gryphus hurled the softened bulb with all his force on the flags, where almost immediately after it was crushed to atoms under his heavy shoe.

Van Baerle saw the work of destruction, got a glimpse of the juicy remains of his darling bulb, and, guessing the cause of the ferocious joy of Gryphus, uttered a cry of agony, which would have melted the heart even of that ruthless jailer who some years before killed Pelisson's spider.

The idea of striking down this spiteful bully passed like lightning through the brain of the tulip-fancier. The blood rushed to his brow, and seemed like fire in his eyes, which blinded him; and he raised in his two hands the heavy jug with all the now useless earth which remained in it. One instant more, and he would have flung it on the bald head of old Gryphus.

But a cry stopped him; a cry of agony, uttered by poor Rosa, who, trembling and pale, with her arms raised to heaven, made her appearance behind the grated window, and thus interposed between her father and her friend.

Gryphus then understood the danger with which he had been threatened, and he broke out in a volley of the most terrible abuse.

"Indeed," said Cornelius to him, "you must be a very mean and spiteful fellow to rob a poor prisoner of his only consolation, a tulip bulb."

"For shame, my father," Rosa chimed in "it is indeed a crime you have committed here."

"Ah, is that you, my little chatter-box?" the old man cried, boiling with rage and turning towards her; "don't you meddle with what don't concern you, but go down as quickly as possible."

"Unfortunate me," continued Cornelius, overwhelmed with grief.

"After all, it is but a tulip," Gryphus resumed, as he began to be a little ashamed of himself. "You may have as many tulips as you like: I have three hundred of them in my loft."

"To the devil with your tulips!" cried Cornelius; "you are worthy of each other: had I a hundred thousand millions of them I would gladly give them for the one which you have just destroyed!"

"Oh, so!" Gryphus said, in a tone of triumph; "now there we have it. It was not your tulip you cared for. There was in that false bulb some witchcraft, perhaps some means of correspondence with conspirators against his Highness who has granted you your life. I always said they were wrong in not cutting your head off."

"Father, father!" cried Rosa.

"Yes, yes! it is better as it is now," repeated Gryphus, growing warm; "I have destroyed it, and I'll do the same again, as often as you repeat the trick. Did n't I tell you, my fine fellow, that I would make your life a hard one?"

"A curse on you!" Cornelius exclaimed, quite beyond himself with despair, as he gathered, with his trembling fingers, the remnants of that bulb on which he had rested so many joys and so many hopes.

"We shall plant the other to-morrow, my dear Mynheer Cornelius," said Rosa, in a low voice, who understood the intense grief of the unfortunate tulip-fancier, and who, with the pure sacred love of her innocent heart, poured these kind words, like a drop of balm, on the bleeding wounds of Cornelius.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ROSA'S LOVER.

ROSA had scarcely pronounced these consolatory words when a voice was heard from the staircase asking Gryphus how matters were going on.

"Do you hear, father?" said Rosa.

"What?"

"Master Jacob calls you; he is uneasy."

"There was such a noise," said Gryphus; "would n't you have thought he would murder me, this doctor? They are always very troublesome fellows, these scholars."

Then, pointing with his finger towards the staircase, he said to Rosa: "Just lead the way, Miss."

After this he locked the door and called out: "I shall be with you directly, friend Jacob."

Poor Cornelius, thus left alone with his bitter grief, muttered to himself,—

"Ah, you old hangman! it is me you have trodden under foot; you have murdered me; I shall not survive it."

And certainly the unfortunate prisoner would have fallen ill but for the counterpoise which Providence had granted to his grief, and which was called Rosa.

In the evening she came back. Her first words announced to Cornelius that henceforth her father would make no objection to his cultivating flowers.

"And how do you know that?" the prisoner asked, with a doleful look.

"I know it because he has said so."

"To deceive me, perhaps."

"No, he repents."

"Ah, yes ! but too late."

"This repentance is not of himself."

"And who put it into him ?"

"If you only knew how his friend scolded him !"

"Ah, Master Jacob ; he does not leave you, then, that Master Jacob ?"

"At any rate, he leaves us as little as he can help."

Saying this, she smiled in such a way that the little cloud of jealousy which had darkened the brow of Cornelius speedily vanished.

"How was it ?" asked the prisoner.

"Well, being asked by his friend, my father told at supper the whole story of the tulip, or rather of the bulb, and of his own fine exploit of crushing it."

Cornelius heaved a sigh, which might have been called a groan.

"Had you only seen Master Jacob at that moment !" continued Rosa. "I really thought he would set fire to the castle ; his eyes were like two flaming torches, his hair stood on end, and he clinched his fist for a moment ; I thought he would have strangled my father.

"'You have done that,' he cried, 'you have crushed the bulb ?'

"'Indeed I have.'

"'It is infamous,' said Master Jacob, 'it is odious ! You have committed a great crime !'

"My father was quite dumfounded.

"'Are you mad, too ?' he asked his friend."

"Oh, what a worthy man is this Master Jacob !" muttered Cornelius, — "an honest soul, an excellent heart, that he is."

"The truth is, that it is impossible to treat a man more rudely than he did my father ; he was really quite in despair, repeating over and over again, —

"'Crushed, crushed the bulb ! my God, my God ! crushed !'

"Then, turning toward me, he asked, 'But it was not the only one that he had ?' "

"Did he ask that?" inquired Cornelius, with some anxiety.

"You think it was not the only one?" said my father. 'Very well, we shall search for the others.'

"You will search for the others?" cried Jacob, taking my father by the collar; but he immediately loosed him. Then, turning towards me, he continued asking, 'And what did that poor young man say?'

"I did not know what to answer, as you had so strictly enjoined me never to allow any one to guess the interest which you are taking in the bulb. Fortunately, my father saved me from the difficulty, by chiming in, —

"What did he say? Did n't he fume and fret?"

"I interrupted him, saying, 'Was it not natural that he should be furious, you were so unjust and brutal, father?'

"Well, now, are you mad?" cried my father; 'what immense misfortune is it to crush a tulip bulb? You may buy a hundred of them in the market of Gorcum.'

"Perhaps some less precious one than that was!" I quite incautiously replied."

"And what did Jacob say or do at these words?" asked Cornelius.

"At these words, if I must say it, his eyes seemed to flash like lightning."

"But," said Cornelius, "that was not all; I am sure he said something in his turn."

"So, then, my pretty Rosa," he said, with a voice as sweet as honey, — "so you think that bulb to have been a precious one?"

"I saw that I had made a blunder."

"What do I know?" I said, negligently; 'do I understand anything of tulips? I only know — as unfortunately it is our lot to live with prisoners — that for them any pastime is of value. This poor Mynheer van Baerle amused himself with this bulb. Well, I think it very cruel to take from him the only thing that he could have amused himself with.'

“‘But, first of all,’ said my father, ‘we ought to know how he has contrived to procure this bulb.’

“I turned my eyes away to avoid my father’s look; but I met those of Jacob.

“It was as if he had tried to read my thoughts at the bottom of my heart.

“Some little show of anger sometimes saves an answer. I shrugged my shoulders, turned my back, and advanced towards the door.

“But I was kept by something which I heard, although it was uttered in a very low voice only.

“Jacob said to my father, —

“‘It would not be so difficult to ascertain that.’

“‘How so?’

“‘You need only search his person: and if he has the other bulbs, we shall find them, as there usually are three suckers!’”

“Three suckers!” cried Cornelius. “Did you say that I have three?”

“The word certainly struck me just as much as it does you. I turned round. They were both of them so deeply engaged in their conversation that they did not observe my movement.

“‘But,’ said my father, ‘perhaps he has not got his bulbs about him?’

“‘Then take him down, under some pretext or other, and I will search his cell in the mean while.’”

“Halloa, halloa!” said Cornelius. “But this Mr. Jacob of yours is a villain, it seems.”

“I am afraid he is.”

“Tell me, Rosa,” continued Cornelius, with a pensive air.

“What?”

“Did you not tell me that on the day when you prepared your borders this man followed you?”

“So he did.”

“That he glided like a shadow behind the elder trees?”

"Certainly."

"That not one of your movements escaped him?"

"Not one, indeed."

"Rosa," said Cornelius, growing quite pale.

"Well?"

"It was not you he was after."

"Who else, then?"

"It is not you that he was in love with!"

"But with whom else?"

"He was after my bulb, and is in love with my tulip!"

"You don't say so! And yet it is very possible," said Rosa.

"Will you make sure of it?"

"In what manner?"

"Oh, it would be very easy!"

"Tell me."

"Go to-morrow into the garden; manage matters so that Jacob may know, as he did the first time, that you are going there, and that he may follow you. Feign to put the bulb into the ground; leave the garden; but look through the keyhole of the door and watch him."

"Well, and what then?"

"What then? We shall do as he does."

"Oh!" said Rosa with a sigh, "you are very fond of your bulbs."

"To tell the truth," said the prisoner, sighing likewise, "since your father crushed that unfortunate bulb, I feel as if part of my own self had been paralyzed."

"Now just hear me," said Rosa; "will you try something else?"

"What?"

"Will you accept the proposition of my father?"

"Which proposition?"

"Did not he offer to you tulip bulbs by hundreds?"

"Indeed he did."

"Accept two or three, and, along with them, you may grow the third sucker."

"Yes, that would do very well," said Cornelius, knitting his brow, "if your father were alone; but there is that Master Jacob, who watches all our ways."

"Well, that is true; but only think! you are depriving yourself, as I can easily see, of a very great pleasure."

She pronounced these words with a smile, which was not altogether without a tinge of irony.

Cornelius reflected for a moment; he evidently was struggling against some vehement desire.

"No!" he cried at last, with the stoicism of a Roman of old, "it would be a weakness, it would be a folly, it would be a meanness! If I thus give up the only and last resource which we possess to the uncertain chances of the bad passions of anger and envy, I should never deserve to be forgiven. No, Rosa, no; to-morrow we shall come to a conclusion as to the spot to be chosen for your tulip; you will plant it according to my instructions; and as to the third sucker," — Cornelius here heaved a deep sigh, — "watch over it as a miser over his first or last piece of gold; as the mother over her child; as the wounded over the last drop of blood in his veins; watch over it, Rosa! Some voice within me tells me that it will be our saving, that it will be a source of good to us."

"Be easy, Mynheer Cornelius," said Rosa, with a sweet mixture of melancholy and gravity, "be easy; your wishes are commands to me."

"And even," continued Van Baerle, warming more and more with his subject, "if you should perceive that your steps are watched, and that your speech has excited the suspicion of your father and of that detestable Master Jacob, — well, Rosa, don't hesitate for one moment to sacrifice me, who am only still living through you, — me, who have no one in the world but you; sacrifice me, — don't come to see me any more."

Rosa felt her heart sink within her, and her eyes were filling with tears.

"Alas!" she said.

"What is it?" asked Cornelius.

"I see one thing."

"What do you see?"

"I see," said she, bursting out in sobs, "I see that you love your tulips with such love as to have no more room in your heart left for other affections."

Saying this, she fled.

Cornelius, after this, passed one of the worst nights he ever had in his life.

Rosa was vexed with him, and with good reason. Perhaps she would never return to see the prisoner, and then he would have no more news, either of Rosa or of his tulips.

We have to confess, to the disgrace of our hero and of floriculture, that of his two affections he felt most strongly inclined to regret the loss of Rosa; and when, at about three in the morning, he fell asleep overcome with fatigue, and harassed with remorse, the grand black tulip yielded precedence in his dreams to the sweet blue eyes of the fair maid of Friesland.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE MAID AND THE FLOWER.

BUT poor Rosa, in her secluded chamber, could not have known of whom or of what Cornelius was dreaming.

From what he had said she was more ready to believe that he dreamed of the black tulip than of her; and yet Rosa was mistaken.

But as there was no one to tell her so, and as the words of Cornelius's thoughtless speech had fallen upon her heart like drops of poison, she did not dream, but she wept.

The fact was, that, as Rosa was a high-spirited creature, of no mean perception and a noble heart, she took a very clear and judicious view of her own social position, if not of her moral and physical qualities.

Cornelius was a scholar, and was wealthy, — at least he had been before the confiscation of his property; Cornelius belonged to the merchant-bourgeoisie, who were prouder of their richly emblazoned shop signs than the hereditary nobility of their heraldic bearings. Therefore, although he might find Rosa a pleasant companion for the dreary hours of his captivity, when it came to a question of bestowing his heart it was almost certain that he would bestow it upon a tulip, — that is to say, upon the proudest and noblest of flowers, rather than upon poor Rosa, the jailer's lowly child.

Thus Rosa understood Cornelius's preference of the tulip to herself, but was only so much the more unhappy therefor.

During the whole of this terrible night the poor girl did not close an eye, and before she rose in the morning she

had come to the resolution of making her appearance at the grated window no more.

But as she knew with what ardent desire Cornelius looked forward to the news about his tulip; and as, notwithstanding her determination not to see any more a man her pity for whose fate was fast growing into love, she did not, on the other hand, wish to drive him to despair, she resolved to continue by herself the reading and writing lessons; and, fortunately, she had made sufficient progress to dispense with the help of a master when the master was not to be Cornelius.

Rosa therefore applied herself most diligently to reading poor Cornelius de Witt's Bible, on the second fly leaf of which the last will of Cornelius van Baerle was written.

"Alas!" she muttered, when perusing again this document, which she never finished without a tear, the pearl of love, rolling from her limpid eyes on her pale cheeks, — "alas! at that time I thought for one moment he loved me."

Poor Rosa! she was mistaken. Never had the love of the prisoner been more sincere than at the time at which we are now arrived, when in the contest between the black tulip and Rosa the tulip had had to yield to her the first and foremost place in Cornelius's heart.

But Rosa was not aware of it.

Having finished reading, she took her pen, and began with as laudable diligence the by far more difficult task of writing.

As, however, Rosa was already able to write a legible hand when Cornelius so uncautiously opened his heart, she did not despair of progressing quickly enough to write, after eight days at the latest, to the prisoner an account of his tulip.

She had not forgotten one word of the directions given to her by Cornelius, whose speeches she treasured in her heart, even when they did not take the shape of directions.

He, on his part, awoke deeper in love than ever. The tulip, indeed, was still a luminous and prominent object in his mind ; but he no longer looked upon it as a treasure to which he ought to sacrifice everything, and even Rosa, but as a marvellous combination of nature and art with which he would have been happy to adorn the bosom of his beloved one.

Yet during the whole of that day he was haunted with a vague uneasiness, at the bottom of which was the fear lest Rosa should not come in the evening to pay him her usual visit. This thought took more and more hold of him, until at the approach of evening his whole mind was absorbed in it.

How his heart beat when darkness closed in ! The words which he had said to Rosa on the evening before, and which had so deeply afflicted her, now came back to his mind more vividly than ever ; and he asked himself how he could have told his gentle comforter to sacrifice him to his tulip, — that is to say, to give up seeing him, if need be, — whereas to him the sight of Rosa had become a condition of life.

In Cornelius's cell one heard the chimes of the clock of the fortress. It struck seven, it struck eight, it struck nine. Never did the metal voice vibrate more forcibly through the heart of any man than did the last stroke, marking the ninth hour, through the heart of Cornelius.

All was then silent again. Cornelius put his hand on his heart, to repress as it were its violent palpitation, and listened.

The noise of her footstep, the rustling of her gown on the staircase, were so familiar to his ear, that she had no sooner mounted one step than he used to say to himself, —

“Here comes Rosa.”

This evening none of those little noises broke the silence of the lobby ; the clock struck nine, and a quarter ; the half-hour ; then a quarter to ten ; and at last its deep tone announced, not only to the inmates of the fortress, but also to all the inhabitants of Loewestein, that it was ten.

This was the hour at which Rosa generally used to leave Cornelius. The hour had struck, but Rosa had not come.

Thus then his foreboding had not deceived him ; Rosa, being vexed, shut herself up in her room and left him to himself.

"Alas!" he thought, "I have deserved all this. She will come no more, and she is right in staying away; in her place I should do just the same."

Yet notwithstanding all this, Cornelius listened, waited, and hoped until midnight; then he threw himself upon the bed, with his clothes on.

It was a long and sad night for him, and the day brought no hope to the prisoner.

At eight in the morning, the door of his cell opened; but Cornelius did not even turn his head; he had heard the heavy step of Gryphus in the lobby, but this step had perfectly satisfied the prisoner that his jailer was coming alone.

Thus Cornelius did not even look at Gryphus.

And yet he would have been so glad to draw him out, and to inquire about Rosa. He even very nearly made this inquiry, strange as it would needs have appeared to her father. To tell the truth, there was in all this some selfish hope to hear from Gryphus that his daughter was ill.

Except on extraordinary occasions, Rosa never came during the day. Cornelius therefore did not really expect her as long as the day lasted. Yet his sudden starts, his listening at the door, his rapid glances at every little noise towards the grated window, showed clearly that the prisoner entertained some latent hope that Rosa would, somehow or other, break her rule.

At the second visit of Gryphus, Cornelius, contrary to all his former habits, asked the old jailer, with the most winning voice, about her health; but Gryphus contented himself with giving the laconical answer, —

"All's well."

At the third visit of the day, Cornelius changed his former inquiry : —

“I hope nobody is ill at Loewestein ?”

“Nobody,” replied, even more laconically, the jailer, shutting the door before the nose of the prisoner.

Gryphus, being little used to this sort of civility on the part of Cornelius, began to suspect that his prisoner was about to try and bribe him.

Cornelius was now alone once more ; it was seven o'clock in the evening, and the anxiety of yesterday returned with increased intensity.

But another time the hours passed away without bringing the sweet vision which lighted up, through the grated window, the cell of poor Cornelius, and which, in retiring, left light enough in his heart to last until it came back again.

Van Baerle passed the night in an agony of despair. On the following day Gryphus appeared to him even more hideous, brutal, and hateful than usual : in his mind, or rather in his heart, there had been some hope that it was the old man who prevented his daughter from coming.

In his wrath he would have strangled Gryphus, but would not this have separated him for ever from Rosa ?

The evening closing in, his despair changed into melancholy, which was the more gloomy as, involuntarily, Van Baerle mixed up with it the thought of his poor tulip. It was now just that week in April which the most experienced gardeners point out as the precise time when tulips ought to be planted. He had said to Rosa, —

“I shall tell you the day when you are to put the bulb in the ground.”

He had intended to fix, at the vainly hoped for interview, the following day as the time for that momentous operation. The weather was propitious ; the air, although still damp, began to be tempered by those pale rays of the April sun which, being the first, appear so congenial, although so pale. How if Rosa allowed the right moment

for planting the bulb to pass by, — if, in addition to the grief of seeing her no more, he should have to deplore the misfortune of seeing his tulip fail on account of its having been planted too late, or of its not having been planted at all !

These two vexations combined might well make him leave off eating and drinking.

This was the case on the fourth day.

It was pitiful to see Cornelius, dumb with grief, and pale from utter prostration, stretch out his head through the iron bars of his window, at the risk of not being able to draw it back again, to try and get a glimpse of the garden on the left spoken of by Rosa, who had told him that its parapet overlooked the river. He hoped that perhaps he might see, in the light of the April sun, Rosa or the tulip, the two lost objects of his love.

In the evening, Gryphus took away the breakfast and dinner of Cornelius, who had scarcely touched them.

On the following day he did not touch them at all, and Gryphus carried the dishes away just as he had brought them.

Cornelius had remained in bed the whole day.

“ Well,” said Gryphus, coming down from the last visit, “ I think we shall soon get rid of our scholar.”

Rosa was startled.

“ Nonsense !” said Jacob. “ What do you mean ?”

“ He does n’t drink, he does n’t eat, he does n’t leave his bed. He will get out of it, like Mynheer Grotius, in a chest ; only the chest will be a coffin.”

Rosa grew pale as death.

“ Ah !” she said to herself, “ he is uneasy about his tulip.”

And, rising with a heavy heart, she returned to her chamber, where she took a pen and paper, and during the whole of that night busied herself with tracing letters.

On the following morning, when Cornelius got up to drag himself to the window, he perceived a paper which had been slipped under the door.

He pounced upon it, opened it, and read the following words, in a handwriting which he could scarcely have recognized as that of Rosa, so much had she improved during her short absence of seven days, —

“Be easy; your tulip is going on well.”

Although these few words of Rosa’s somewhat soothed the grief of Cornelius, yet he felt not the less the irony which was at the bottom of them. Rosa, then, was not ill, she was offended; she had not been forcibly prevented from coming, but had voluntarily stayed away. Thus Rosa, being at liberty, found in her own will the force not to come and see him, who was dying with grief at not having seen her.

Cornelius had paper and a pencil which Rosa had brought to him. He guessed that she expected an answer, but that she would not come before the evening to fetch it. He therefore wrote on a piece of paper, similar to that which he had received, —

“It was not my anxiety about the tulip that has made me ill, but the grief at not seeing you.”

After Gryphus had made his last visit of the day, and darkness had set in, he slipped the paper under the door, and listened with the most intense attention; but he neither heard Rosa’s footsteps nor the rustling of her gown.

He only heard a voice as feeble as a breath, and gentle like a caress, which whispered through the grated little window in the door the word, —

“To-morrow!”

Now to-morrow was the eighth day. For eight days Cornelius and Rosa had not seen each other.

CHAPTER XX.

THE EVENTS WHICH TOOK PLACE DURING THOSE EIGHT
DAYS.

ON the following evening, at the usual hour, Van Baerle heard some one scratch at the grated little window, just as Rosa had been in the habit of doing in the heyday of their friendship.

Cornelius being, as may easily be imagined, not far off from the door, perceived Rosa, who at last was waiting again for him with her lamp in her hand.

Seeing him so sad and pale, she was startled, and said, —
“You are ill, Mynheer Cornelius?”

“Yes, I am,” he answered, as indeed he was suffering in mind and in body.

“I saw that you did not eat,” said Rosa; “my father told me that you remained in bed all day. I then wrote to calm your uneasiness concerning the fate of the most precious object of your anxiety.”

“And I,” said Cornelius, “I have answered. Seeing your return, my dear Rosa, I thought you had received my letter.”

“It is true; I have received it.”

“You cannot this time excuse yourself with not being able to read. Not only do you read very fluently, but also you have made marvellous progress in writing.”

“Indeed, I have not only received, but also read your note. Accordingly I am come to see whether there might not be some remedy to restore you to health.”

“Restore me to health?” cried Cornelius; “but have you any good news to communicate to me?”

Saying this, the poor prisoner looked at Rosa, his eyes sparkling with hope.

Whether she did not, or would not, understand this look, Rosa answered gravely, —

“I have only to speak to you about your tulip, which, as I well know, is the object uppermost in your mind.”

Rosa pronounced those few words in a freezing tone, which cut deeply into the heart of Cornelius. He did not suspect what lay hidden under this appearance of indifference with which the poor girl affected to speak of her rival, the black tulip.

“Oh!” muttered Cornelius, “again! again! Have I not told you, Rosa, that I thought but of you? that it was you alone whom I regretted, you whom I missed, you whose absence I felt more than the loss of liberty and of life itself?”

Rosa smiled with a melancholy air.

“Ah!” she said, “your tulip has been in such danger.”

Cornelius trembled involuntarily, and showed himself clearly to be caught in the trap, if ever the remark was meant as such.

“Danger!” he cried, quite alarmed; “what danger?”

Rosa looked at him with gentle compassion; she felt that what she wished was beyond the power of this man, and that he must be taken as he was, with his little foible.

“Yes,” she said, “you have guessed the truth; that suitor and amorous swain, Jacob, did not come on my account.”

“And what did he come for?” Cornelius anxiously asked.

“He came for the sake of the tulip.”

“Alas!” said Cornelius, growing even paler at this piece of information than he had been when Rosa, a fortnight before, had told him that Jacob was coming for her sake.

Rosa saw this alarm, and Cornelius guessed, from the expression of her face, in what direction her thoughts were running.

“Oh, pardon me, Rosa!” he said, “I know you, and I

am well aware of the kindness and sincerity of your heart. To you God has given the thought and strength for defending yourself; but to my poor tulip, when it is in danger, God has given nothing of the sort."

Rosa, without replying to this excuse of the prisoner, continued,—

"From the moment when I first knew that you were uneasy on account of the man who followed me, and in whom I had recognized Jacob, I was even more uneasy myself. On the day, therefore, after that on which I saw you last, and on which you said —"

Cornelius interrupted her.

"Once more, pardon me, Rosa!" he cried. "I was wrong in saying to you what I said. I have asked your pardon for that unfortunate speech before. I ask it again: shall I always ask it in vain?"

"On the following day," Rosa continued, "remembering what you had told me about the stratagem which I was to employ to ascertain whether that odious man was after the tulip, or after me —"

"Yes, yes, odious. Tell me," he said, "do you hate that man?"

"I do hate him," said Rosa, "as he is the cause of all the unhappiness I have suffered these eight days."

"You, too, have been unhappy, Rosa? I thank you a thousand times for this kind confession."

"Well, on the day after that unfortunate one, I went down into the garden and proceeded towards the border where I was to plant your tulip, looking round all the while to see whether I was again followed as I was last time."

"And then?" Cornelius asked.

"And then the same shadow glided between the gate and the wall, and once more disappeared behind the elder-trees."

"You feigned not to see him, did n't you?" Cornelius asked, remembering all the details of the advice which he had given to Rosa.

"Yes, and I stooped over the border, in which I dug with a spade, as if I was going to put the bulb in."

"And he,— what did he do during all this time?"

"I saw his eyes glisten through the branches of the tree like those of a tiger."

"There you see, there you see!" cried Cornelius.

"Then, after having finished my make-believe work, I retired."

"But only behind the garden door, I dare say, so that you might see through the keyhole what he was going to do when you had left?"

"He waited for a moment, very likely to make sure of my not coming back; after which he sneaked forth from his hiding-place, and approached the border by a long round-about; at last, having reached his goal, that is to say, the spot where the ground was newly turned, he stopped with a careless air, looking about in all directions, and scanning every corner of the garden, every window of the neighbouring houses, and even the sky; after which, thinking himself quite alone, quite isolated, and out of everybody's sight, he pounced upon the border, plunged both his hands into the soft soil, took a handful of the mould, which he gently frittered between his fingers to see whether the bulb was in it, and repeated the same thing twice or three times, until at last he perceived that he was outwitted. Then, keeping down the agitation which was raging in his breast, he took up the rake, smoothed the ground, so as to leave it on his retiring in the same state as he had found it, and, quite abashed and rueful, walked back to the door, affecting the unconcerned air of an ordinary visitor of the garden."

"Oh, the wretch!" muttered Cornelius, wiping the cold sweat from his brow. "Oh, the wretch! I guessed his intentions. But the bulb, Rosa; what have you done with it? It is already rather late to plant it."

"The bulb? It has been in the ground for these six days."

"Where? and how?" cried Cornelius. "Good Heaven,

what imprudence! What is it? In what sort of soil is it? In what aspect? Good or bad? Is there no risk of having it filched by that detestable Jacob?"

"There is no danger of its being stolen," said Rosa, "unless Jacob will force the door of my chamber."

"Oh! then it is with you in your bedroom?" said Cornelius, somewhat relieved. "But in what soil? in what vessel? You don't let it grow, I hope, in water, like those good ladies of Haarlem and Dort, who imagine that water could replace the earth?"

"You may make yourself comfortable on that score," said Rosa, smiling; "your bulb is not growing in water."

"I breathe again."

"It is in a good, sound stone pot, just about the size of the jug in which you had planted yours. The soil is composed of three parts of common mould, taken from the best spot of the garden, and one of the sweepings of the road. I have heard you and that detestable Jacob, as you call him, so often talk about what is the soil best fitted for growing tulips, that I know it as well as the first gardener of Haarlem."

"And now what is the aspect, Rosa?"

"At present it has the sun all day long, — that is to say when the sun shines. But when it once peeps out of the ground, I shall do as you have done here, dear Mynheer Cornelius: I shall put it out of my window on the eastern side from eight in the morning until eleven, and in my window towards the west from three to five in the afternoon."

"That's it! that's it!" cried Cornelius; "and you are a perfect gardener, my pretty Rosa. But I am afraid the nursing of my tulip will take up all your time."

"Yes, it will," said Rosa; "but never mind. Your tulip is my daughter. I shall devote to it the same time as I should to a child of mine, if I were a mother. Only by becoming its mother," Rosa added, smilingly, "can I cease to be its rival."

"My kind and pretty Rosa!" muttered Cornelius, casting on her a glance in which there was much more of the lover than of the gardener, and which afforded Rosa some consolation.

Then, after a silence of some moments, during which Cornelius had grasped through the openings of the grating for the receding hand of Rosa, he said,—

"Do you mean to say that the bulb has now been in the ground for six days?"

"Yes, six days, Mynheer Cornelius," she answered.

"And it does not yet show leaf?"

"No, but I think it will to-morrow."

"Well, then, to-morrow you will bring me news about it, and about yourself, won't you, Rosa? I care very much for the daughter, as you called it just now, but I care even much more for the mother."

"To-morrow?" said Rosa looking at Cornelius askance, "I don't know whether I shall be able to come to-morrow."

"Good heavens!" said Cornelius, "why can't you come to-morrow?"

"Mynheer Cornelius, I have lots of things to do."

"And I have only one," muttered Cornelius.

"Yes," said Rosa, "to love your tulip."

"To love you, Rosa."

Rosa shook her head, after which followed a pause.

"Well," — Cornelius at last broke the silence, — "well, Rosa, everything changes in the realm of nature; the flowers of spring are succeeded by other flowers; and the bees, which so tenderly caressed the violets and the wall-flowers, will flutter with just as much love about the honey-suckles, the rose, the jessamine, and the carnation."

"What does all this mean?" asked Rosa.

"You have abandoned me, Miss Rosa, to seek your pleasure elsewhere. You have done well, and I will not complain. What claim have I to your fidelity?"

"My fidelity!" Rosa exclaimed, with her eyes full of tears, and without caring any longer to hide from Cornelius

this dew of pearls dropping on her cheeks, "my fidelity! have I not been faithful to you?"

"Do you call it faithful to desert me, and to leave me here to die?"

"But, Mynheer Cornelius," said Rosa, "am I not doing everything for you that could give you pleasure? have I not devoted myself to your tulip?"

"You are bitter, Rosa, you reproach me with the only unalloyed pleasure which I have had in this world."

"I reproach you with nothing, Mynheer Cornelius, except, perhaps, with the intense grief which I felt when people came to tell me at the Buytenhof that you were about to be put to death."

"You are displeased, Rosa, my sweet girl, with my loving flowers."

"I am not displeased with your loving them, Mynheer Cornelius, only it makes me sad to think that you love them better than you do me."

"Oh, my dear, dear Rosa! look how my hands tremble; look at my pale cheek, hear how my heart beats. It is for you, my love, not for the black tulip. Destroy the bulb, destroy the germ of that flower, extinguish the gentle light of that innocent and delightful dream, to which I have accustomed myself; but love me, Rosa, love me; for I feel deeply that I love but you."

"Yes, after the black tulip," sighed Rosa, who at last no longer coyly withdrew her warm hands from the grating, as Cornelius most affectionately kissed them.

"Above and before everything in this world, Rosa."

"May I believe you?"

"As you believe in your own existence."

"Well, then, be it so; but loving me does not bind you too much."

"Unfortunately, it does not bind me more than I am bound; but it binds you, Rosa, you."

"To what?"

"First of all, not to marry."

She smiled.

"That's your way," she said; "you are tyrants all of you. You worship a certain beauty; you think of nothing but her. Then you are condemned to death, and, whilst walking to the scaffold, you devote to her your last sigh; and now you expect poor me to sacrifice to you all my dreams and my happiness."

"But who is the beauty you are talking of, Rosa?" said Cornelius, trying in vain to remember a woman to whom Rosa might possibly be alluding.

"The dark beauty with a slender waist, small feet, and a noble head; in short, I am speaking of your flower."

Cornelius smiled.

"That is an imaginary lady love, at all events; whereas, without counting that amorous Jacob, you by your own account are surrounded with all sorts of swains eager to make love to you. Do you remember, Rosa, what you told me of the students, officers, and clerks of the Hague? Are there no clerks, officers, or students at Loewestein?"

"Indeed there are, and lots of them."

"Who write letters?"

"They do write."

"And now, as you know how to read —"

Here Cornelius heaved a sigh at the thought, that, poor captive as he was, to him alone Rosa owed the faculty of reading the love-letters which she received.

"As to that," said Rosa, "I think that in reading the notes addressed to me, and passing the different swains in review who send them to me, I am only following your instructions."

"How so? My instructions?"

"Indeed, your instructions, sir," said Rosa, sighing in her turn; "have you forgotten the will written by your hand on the Bible of Cornelius de Witt? I have not forgotten it; for now, as I know how to read, I read it every day over and over again. In that will you bid me to love and marry a handsome young man of twenty-six or eight

years. I am on the look-out for that young man, and as the whole of my day is taken up with your tulip, you must needs leave me the evenings to find him."

"But, Rosa, the will was made in the expectation of death, and, thanks to Heaven, I am still alive."

"Well, then, I shall not be after the handsome young man, and I shall come to see you."

"That's it, Rosa, come! come!"

"Under one condition."

"Granted beforehand!"

"That the black tulip shall not be mentioned for the next three days."

"It shall never be mentioned any more, if you wish it, Rosa."

"No, no," the damsel said, laughing, "I will not ask for impossibilities."

And, saying this, she brought her fresh cheek, as if unconsciously, so near the iron grating, that Cornelius was able to touch it with his lips.

Rosa uttered a little scream, which, however, was full of love, and disappeared.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE SECOND BULB.

THE night was a happy one, and the whole of the next day happier still.

During the last few days, the prison had been heavy, dark, and lowering, as it were, with all its weight on the unfortunate captive. Its walls were black, its air chilling, the iron bars seemed to exclude every ray of light.

But when Cornelius awoke next morning, a beam of the morning sun was playing about those iron bars; pigeons were hovering about with outspread wings, whilst others were lovingly cooing on the roof or near the still closed window.

Cornelius ran to that window and opened it; it seemed to him as if new life, and joy, and liberty itself were entering with this sunbeam into his cell, which, so dreary of late, was now cheered and irradiated by the light of love.

When Gryphus, therefore, came to see his prisoner in the morning, he no longer found him morose and lying in bed, but standing at the window, and singing a little ditty.

"Halloa!" exclaimed the jailer.

"How are you this morning?" asked Cornelius.

Gryphus looked at him with a scowl.

"And how is the dog, and Master Jacob, and our pretty Rosa?"

Gryphus ground his teeth, saying, —

"Here is your breakfast."

"Thank you, friend Cerberus," said the prisoner; "you are just in time; I am very hungry."

"Oh! you are hungry, are you?" said Gryphus.

"And why not?" asked Van Baerle.

"The conspiracy seems to thrive," remarked Gryphus.

"What conspiracy?"

"Very well; I know what I know, Master Scholar; just be quiet, we shall be on our guard."

"Be on your guard, friend Gryphus; be on your guard as long as you please; my conspiracy, as well as my person, is entirely at your service."

"We'll see that at noon."

Saying this, Gryphus went out.

"At noon?" repeated Cornelius; "what does that mean? Well, let us wait until the clock strikes twelve, and we shall see."

It was very easy for Cornelius to wait for twelve at mid-day, as he was already waiting for nine at night.

It struck twelve, and there were heard on the staircase not only the steps of Gryphus, but also those of three or four soldiers, who were coming up with him.

The door opened. Gryphus entered, led his men in, and shut the door after them.

"There, now search!"

They searched not only the pockets of Cornelius, but even his person; yet they found nothing.

They then searched the sheets, the mattress, and the straw mattress of his bed; and again they found nothing.

Now, Cornelius rejoiced that he had not taken the third sucker under his own care. Gryphus would have been sure to ferret it out in the search, and would then have treated it as he did the first.

And certainly never did prisoner look with greater complacency at a search made in his cell than Cornelius.

Gryphus retired with the pencil and the two or three leaves of white paper which Rosa had given to Van Baerle; this was the only trophy brought back from the expedition.

At six Gryphus came back again, but alone; Cornelius tried to propitiate him, but Gryphus growled, showed a large tooth like a tusk, which he had in the corner of his

mouth, and went out backwards, like a man who is afraid of being attacked from behind.

Cornelius burst out laughing, to which Gryphus answered through the grating, —

“Let him laugh that wins.”

The winner that day was Cornelius; Rosa came at nine.

She was without a lantern. She needed no longer a light, as she could now read. Moreover, the light might betray her, as Jacob was dogging her steps more than ever. And lastly, the light would have shown her blushes.

Of what did the young people speak that evening? Of those matters of which lovers speak at the house doors in France, or from a balcony into the street in Spain, or down from a terrace into a garden in the East.

They spoke of those things which give wings to the hours; they spoke of everything except the black tulip.

At last, when the clock struck ten, they parted as usual.

Cornelius was happy, as thoroughly happy as a tulip-fancier would be to whom one has not spoken of his tulip.

He found Rosa pretty, good, graceful, and charming.

But why did Rosa object to the tulip being spoken of?

This was indeed a great defect in Rosa.

Cornelius confessed to himself, sighing, that woman was not perfect.

Part of the night he thought of this imperfection; that is to say, so long as he was awake he thought of Rosa.

After having fallen asleep, he dreamed of her.

But the Rosa of his dreams was by far more perfect than the Rosa of real life. Not only did the Rosa of his dreams speak of the tulip, but also brought to him a black one in a china vase.

Cornelius then awoke, trembling with joy, and muttering, —

“Rosa, Rosa, I love you.”

And as it was already day, he thought it right not to fall asleep again, and he continued following up the line of thought in which his mind was engaged when he awoke.

Ah! if Rosa had only conversed about the tulip, Cornelius would have preferred her to Queen Semiramis, to Queen Cleopatra, to Queen Elizabeth, to Queen Anne of Austria; that is to say, to the greatest or most beautiful queens whom the world has seen.

But Rosa had forbidden it under pain of not returning; Rosa had forbidden the least mention of the tulip for three days. That meant seventy-two hours given to the lover to be sure; but it was seventy-two hours stolen from the horticulturist.

There was one consolation: of the seventy-two hours during which Rosa would not allow the tulip to be mentioned, thirty-six had passed already; and the remaining thirty-six would pass quickly enough, eighteen with waiting for the evening's interview, and eighteen with rejoicing in its remembrance.

Rosa came at the same hour, and Cornelius submitted most heroically to the pangs which the compulsory silence concerning the tulip gave him.

His fair visitor, however, was well aware that, to command on the one point, people must yield on another; she therefore no longer drew back her hands from the grating, and even allowed Cornelius tenderly to kiss her beautiful golden tresses.

Poor girl! she had no idea that these playful little lovers' tricks were much more dangerous than speaking of the tulip was; but she became aware of the fact as she returned with a beating heart, with glowing cheeks, dry lips, and moist eyes.

And on the following evening, after the first exchange of salutations, she retired a step, looking at him with a glance the expression of which would have rejoiced his heart could he but have seen it.

"Well," she said, "she is up."

"She is up! Who? What?" asked Cornelius, who did not venture on a belief that Rosa would, of her own accord, have abridged the term of his probation.

"She? Well, my daughter, the tulip," said Rosa.

"What!" cried Cornelius, "you give me permission, then?"

"I do," said Rosa, with the tone of an affectionate mother who grants a pleasure to her child.

"Ah, Rosa!" said Cornelius, putting his lips to the grating with the hope of touching a cheek, a hand, a forehead, — anything, in short.

He touched something much better, — two warm and half open lips.

Rosa uttered a slight scream.

Cornelius understood that he must make haste to continue the conversation. He guessed that this unexpected kiss had frightened Rosa.

"Is it growing up straight?"

"Straight as a rocket," said Rosa.

"How high?"

"At least two inches."

"Oh, Rosa, take good care of it, and we shall soon see it grow quickly."

"Can I take more care of it?" said she. "Indeed, I think of nothing else but the tulip."

"Of nothing else, Rosa? Why, now I shall grow jealous in my turn."

"Oh, you know that to think of the tulip is to think of you; I never lose sight of it. I see it from my bed; on awaking it is the first object that meets my eyes, and on falling asleep the last on which they rest. During the day I sit and work by its side, for I have never left my chamber since I put it there."

"You are right, Rosa, it is your dowry, you know."

"Yes, and with it I may marry a young man of twenty-six or twenty-eight years, whom I shall be in love with."

"Don't talk in that way, you naughty girl."

That evening Cornelius was one of the happiest of men. Rosa allowed him to press her hand in his, and to keep it as long as he would, besides which he might talk of his tulip as much as he liked.

From that hour every day marked some progress in the growth of the tulip and in the affection of the two young people.

At one time it was that the leaves had expanded, and at another that the flower itself had formed.

Great was the joy of Cornelius at this news, and his questions succeeded one another with a rapidity which gave proof of their importance.

"Formed!" exclaimed Cornelius, "is it really formed?"

"It is," repeated Rosa.

Cornelius trembled with joy, so much so that he was obliged to hold by the grating.

"Good heavens!" he exclaimed.

Then, turning again to Rosa, he continued his questions.

"Is the oval regular? the cylinder full? and are the points very green?"

"The oval is almost one inch long, and tapers like a needle, the cylinder swells at the sides, and the points are ready to open."

Two days after Rosa announced that they were open.

"Open, Rosa!" cried Cornelius. "Is the involucre open? but then one may see and already distinguish —"

Here the prisoner paused, anxiously taking breath.

"Yes," answered Rosa, "one may already distinguish a thread of different colour, as thin as a hair."

"And its colour?" asked Cornelius trembling.

"Oh," answered Rosa, "it is very dark!"

"Brown?"

"Darker than that."

"Darker, my good Rosa, darker? Thank you. Dark as —"

"Dark as the ink with which I wrote to you."

Cornelius uttered a cry of mad joy.

Then, suddenly stopping and clasping his hands, he said,—

"Oh, there is not an angel in heaven that may be compared to you, Rosa!"

"Indeed!" said Rosa, smiling at his enthusiasm.

"Rosa, you have worked with such ardour, — you have done so much for me! Rosa, my tulip is about to flower, and it will flower black! Rosa, Rosa, you are the most perfect being on earth!"

"After the tulip, though."

"Ah! be quiet, you malicious little creature, be quiet! For shame! Do not spoil my pleasure. But tell me, Rosa, — as the tulip is so far advanced, it will flower in two or three days, at the latest?"

"To-morrow, or the day after."

"Ah! and I shall not see it," cried Cornelius, starting back, "I shall not kiss it, as a wonderful work of the Almighty, as I kiss your hand and your cheek, Rosa, when by chance they are near the grating."

Rosa drew near, not by accident, but intentionally, and Cornelius kissed her tenderly.

"Faith, I shall cull it, if you wish it."

"Oh, no, no, Rosa! when it is open, place it carefully in the shade, and immediately send a message to Haarlem, to the President of the Horticultural Society, that the grand black tulip is in flower. I know well it is far to Haarlem, but with money you will find a messenger. Have you any money, Rosa?"

Rosa smiled.

"Oh, yes!" she said.

"Enough?" said Cornelius.

"I have three hundred guilders."

"Oh, if you have three hundred guilders, you must not send a messenger, Rosa, but you must go to Haarlem yourself."

"But what in the mean time is to become of the flower?"

"Oh, the flower! you must take it with you. You understand that you must not separate from it for an instant."

"But whilst I am not separating from it, I am separating from you, Mynheer Cornelius."

"Ah! that's true, my sweet Rosa. Oh, my God! how

wicked men are! What have I done to offend them, and why have they deprived me of my liberty? You are right, Rosa, I cannot live without you. Well, you will send some one to Haarlem, — that's settled; really, the matter is wonderful enough for the President to put himself to some trouble. He will come himself to Loewestein to see the tulip."

Then, suddenly checking himself, he said, with a faltering voice, —

"Rosa, Rosa, if after all it should not flower black!"

"Oh, surely, surely, you will know to-morrow, or the day after."

"And to wait until evening to know it, Rosa! I shall die with impatience. Could we not agree about a signal?"

"I shall do better than that."

"What will you do?"

"If it opens at night, I shall come and tell you myself. If it is day, I shall pass your door, and slip you a note either under the door, or through the grating during the time between my father's first and second inspection."

"Yes, Rosa, let it be so. One word of yours, announcing this news to me, will be a double happiness."

"There, ten o'clock strikes," said Rosa, "I must now leave you."

"Yes, yes," said Cornelius, "go, Rosa, go!"

Rosa withdrew, almost melancholy, for Cornelius had all but sent her away.

It is true that he did so in order that she might watch over his black tulip.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE OPENING OF THE FLOWER.

THE night passed away very sweetly for Cornelius, although in great agitation. Every instant he fancied he heard the gentle voice of Rosa calling him. He then started up, went to the door, and looked through the grating, but no one was behind it, and the lobby was empty.

Rosa, no doubt, would be watching too, but, happier than he, she watched over the tulip; she had before her eyes that noble flower, that wonder of wonders, which not only was unknown, but was not even thought possible until then.

What would the world say when it heard that the black tulip was found, that it existed, and that it was the prisoner Van Baerle who had found it?

How Cornelius would have spurned the offer of his liberty in exchange for his tulip!

Day came, without any news; the tulip was not yet in flower.

The day passed as the night. Night came, and with it Rosa, joyous and cheerful as a bird.

"Well?" asked Cornelius.

"Well, all is going on prosperously. This night, without any doubt, our tulip will be in flower."

"And will it flower black?"

"Black as jet."

"Without a speck of any other color."

"Without one speck."

"Good Heavens! my dear Rosa, I have been dreaming all night, in the first place of you," (Rosa made a sign of incredulity,) "and then of what we must do."

"Well?"

"Well, and I will tell you now what I have decided on. The tulip once being in flower, and it being quite certain that it is perfectly black, you must find a messenger."

"If it is no more than that, I have a messenger quite ready."

"Is he safe?"

"One for whom I will answer, — he is one of my lovers."

"I hope not Jacob."

"No, be quiet; it is the ferryman of Loewestein, a smart young man of twenty-five."

"By Jove!"

"Be quiet," said Rosa, smiling, "he is still under age, as you have yourself fixed it from twenty-six to twenty-eight."

"In fine, do you think you may rely on this young man?"

"As on myself; he would throw himself into the Waal or the Meuse if I bade him."

"Well, Rosa, this lad may be at Haarlem in ten hours; you will give me paper and pencil, and, perhaps better still, pen and ink, and I will write, or rather, on second thoughts, you will, for if I did, being a poor prisoner, people might, like your father, see a conspiracy in it. You will write to the President of the Horticultural Society, and I am sure he will come."

"But if he tarries?"

"Well, let us suppose that he tarries one day, or even two; but it is impossible. A tulip-fancier like him will not tarry one hour, not one minute, not one second, to set out to see the eighth wonder of the world. But, as I said, if he tarried one or even two days, the tulip will still be in its full splendor. The flower once being seen by the President, and the protocol being drawn up, all is in order; you will only keep a duplicate of the protocol, and intrust the tulip to him. Ah! if we had been able to carry it ourselves, Rosa, it would never have left my hands but to pass into yours; but this is a dream, which we must not entertain,"

continued Cornelius with a sigh ; " the eyes of strangers will see it flower to the last. And above all, Rosa, before the President has seen it, let it not be seen by any one. Alas ! if any one saw the black tulip, it would be stolen."

" Oh ! "

" Did you not tell me yourself of what you apprehended from your lover Jacob ? People will steal one guilder, why not a hundred thousand ? "

" I shall watch ; be quiet."

" But if it opened whilst you were here ? "

" The whimsical little thing would indeed be quite capable of playing such a trick," said Rosa.

" And if on your return you find it open ? "

" Well ? "

" Oh, Rosa, whenever it opens, remember that not a moment must be lost in apprising the President."

" And in apprising you. Yes, I understand."

Rosa sighed, yet without any bitter feeling, but rather like a woman who begins to understand a foible, and to accustom herself to it.

" I return to your tulip, Mynheer van Baerle, and as soon as it opens I will give you news, which being done the messenger will set out immediately."

" Rosa, Rosa, I don't know to what wonder under the sun I shall compare you."

" Compare me to the black tulip, and I promise you I shall feel very much flattered. Good night, then, till we meet again, Mynheer Cornelius."

" Oh, say, ' Good night, *my friend*.' "

" Good night, my friend," said Rosa, a little consoled.

" Say, ' My very dear friend.' "

" Oh, my friend — "

" Very dear friend, I entreat you, say ' very dear,' Rosa, very dear."

" Very dear, **yes, very dear,**" said Rosa, with a beating heart, beyond herself with happiness.

" And now that you have said ' very dear,' dear Rosa, say

also 'most happy': say 'happier and more blessed than ever man was under the sun.' I only lack one thing, Rosa."

"And that is?"

"Your cheek, — your fresh cheek, your soft, rosy cheek. Oh, Rosa, give it me of your own free will, and not by chance. Ah!"

The prisoner's prayer ended in a sigh of ecstasy; his lips met those of the maiden, — not by chance, nor by stratagem, but as Saint-Preux's was to meet the lips of Julie a hundred years later.

Rosa made her escape.

Cornelius stood with his heart upon his lips, and his face glued to the wicket in the door.

He was fairly choking with happiness and joy. He opened his window, and gazed long, with swelling heart, at the cloudless vault of heaven, and the moon, which shone like silver upon the two-fold stream flowing from far beyond the hills. He filled his lungs with the pure, sweet air, while his brain dwelt upon thoughts of happiness, and his heart overflowed with gratitude and religious fervor.

"Oh, Thou art always watching from on high, my God," he cried, half prostrate, his glowing eyes fixed upon the stars: "forgive me that I almost doubted Thy existence during these latter days, for Thou didst hide Thy face behind the clouds, and wert for a moment lost to my sight, O Thou merciful God, Thou pitying Father everlasting! But to-day, this evening, and to-night, again I see Thee in all Thy wondrous glory in the mirror of Thy heavenly abode, and more clearly still in the mirror of my grateful heart."

He was well again, the poor invalid; the wretched captive was free once more.

During part of the night Cornelius, with his heart full of joy and delight, remained at his window, gazing at the stars, and listening for every sound.

Then casting a glance from time to time, towards the lobby, —

"Down there," he said, "is Rosa, watching like myself, and waiting from minute to minute; down there, under Rosa's eyes, is the mysterious flower, which lives, which expands, which opens; perhaps Rosa holds in this moment the stem of the tulip between her delicate fingers. Touch it gently, Rosa. Perhaps she touches with her lips its expanding chalice. Touch it cautiously, Rosa, your lips are burning. Yes, perhaps at this moment the two objects of my dearest love caress each other under the eye of Heaven."

At this moment, a star blazed in the southern sky, and shot through the whole horizon, falling down, as it were, on the fortress of Loewestein.

Cornelius felt a thrill run through his frame.

"Ah!" he said, "here is Heaven sending a soul to my flower."

And as if he had guessed correctly, nearly at that very moment the prisoner heard in the lobby a step light as that of a sylph, and the rustling of a gown, and a well-known voice, which said to him, —

"Cornelius, my friend, my very dear friend, and very happy friend, come, come quickly."

Cornelius darted with one spring from the window to the door, his lips met those of Rosa, who told him, with a kiss, —

"It is open, it is black; here it is."

"How! here it is?" exclaimed Cornelius.

"Yes, yes, we ought indeed to run some little risk to give a great joy; here it is, take it."

And with one hand she raised to the level of the grating a dark lantern, which she had lit in the meanwhile, whilst with the other she held to the same height the miraculous tulip.

Cornelius uttered a cry, and was nearly fainting.

"Oh!" muttered he, "my God, my God, thou dost reward

me for my innocence and my captivity, as thou hast allowed two such flowers to grow at the grated window of my prison!"

The tulip was beautiful, splendid, magnificent; its stem was more than eighteen inches high; it rose from out of four green leaves, which were as smooth and straight as iron lance-heads; the whole of the flower was as black and shining as jet.

"Rosa," said Cornelius, almost gasping, "Rosa, there is not one moment to lose in writing the letter."

"It is written, my dearest Cornelius," said Rosa.

"Is it, indeed?"

"Whilst the tulip opened I wrote it myself, for I did not wish to lose a moment. Here is the letter, and tell me whether you approve of it."

Cornelius took the letter, and read, in a handwriting which was much improved even since the last little note he had received from Rosa, as follows:—

"MYNHEER PRESIDENT,—The black tulip is about to open, perhaps in ten minutes. As soon as it is open, I shall send a messenger to you, with the request that you will come and fetch it in person from the fortress at Loewestein. I am the daughter of the jailer, Gryphus, almost as much of a captive as the prisoners of my father. I cannot, therefore, bring to you this wonderful flower. This is the reason why I beg you to come and fetch it yourself.

"It is my wish that it should be called *Rosa Barlaensis*.

"It has opened; it is perfectly black; come, Mynheer President, come.

"I have the honour to be your humble servant,

"ROSA GRYPHUS."

"That's it, dear Rosa, that's it. Your letter is admirable! I could not have written it with such beautiful simplicity. You will give to the committee all the information

that will be required of you. They will then know how the tulip has been grown, how much care and anxiety, and how many sleepless nights, it has cost. But for the present not a minute must be lost. The messenger! the messenger!"

"What's the name of the President?"

"Give me the letter, I will direct it. Oh, he is very well known: it is Mynheer van Systemen, the burgomaster of Haarlem; give it to me, Rosa, give it to me."

And with a trembling hand Cornelius wrote the address, —

"To Mynheer Peter van Systemen, Burgomaster, and President of the Horticultural Society of Haarlem."

"And now, Rosa, go, go," said Cornelius, "and let us implore the protection of God, who has so kindly watched over us until now."

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE RIVAL.

AND in fact the poor young people were in great need of protection.

They had never been so near the destruction of their hopes as at this moment, when they thought themselves certain of their fulfilment.

The reader cannot but have recognized in Jacob our old friend, or rather enemy, Isaac Boxtel, and has guessed, no doubt, that this worthy had followed from the Buytenhof to Loewestein the object of his love and the object of his hatred, — the black tulip and Cornelius van Baerle.

What no one but a tulip-fancier, and an envious tulip-fancier, could have discovered, — the existence of the bulbs and the endeavours of the prisoner, — jealousy had enabled Boxtel, if not to discover, at least to guess.

We have seen him, more successful under the name of Jacob than under that of Isaac, gain the friendship of Gryphus, which for several months he cultivated by means of the best Genièvre ever distilled from the Texel to Antwerp, and he lulled the suspicion of the jealous turnkey by holding out to him the flattering prospect of his designing to marry Rosa.

Besides thus offering a bait to the ambition of the father, he managed, at the same time, to interest his zeal as a jailer, picturing to him in the blackest colours the learned prisoner whom Gryphus had in his keeping, and who, as the sham Jacob had it, was in league with Satan, to the detriment of his Highness the Prince of Orange.

At first he had also made some way with Rosa; not, indeed, in her affections, but inasmuch as, by talking to

her of marriage and of love, he had evaded all the suspicions which he might otherwise have excited.

We have seen how his imprudence in following Rosa into the garden had unmasked him in the eyes of the young damsel, and how the instinctive fears of Cornelius had put the two lovers on their guard against him.

The reader will remember that the first cause of uneasiness was given to the prisoner by the rage of Jacob when Gryphus crushed the first bulb. In that moment Boxtel's exasperation was the more fierce, as, though suspecting that Cornelius possessed a second bulb, he by no means felt sure of it.

From that moment he began to dodge the steps of Rosa, not only following her to the garden, but also to the lobbies.

Only as this time he followed her in the night, and barefooted, he was neither seen nor heard, except once, when Rosa thought she saw something like a shadow on the staircase.

Her discovery, however, was made too late, as Boxtel had heard from the mouth of the prisoner himself that a second bulb existed.

Taken in by the stratagem of Rosa, who had feigned to put it in the ground, and entertaining no doubt that this little farce had been played in order to force him to betray himself, he redoubled his precaution, and employed every means suggested by his crafty nature to watch the others without being watched himself.

He saw Rosa conveying a large flower-pot of white earthenware from her father's kitchen to her bedroom. He saw Rosa washing in pails of water her pretty little hands, begrimed as they were with the mould which she had handled, to give her tulip the best soil possible.

And at last he hired, just opposite Rosa's window, a little attic, distant enough not to allow him to be recognized with the naked eye, but sufficiently near to enable him, with the help of his telescope, to watch everything that was going on at the Loewestein in Rosa's room, just as at Dort he had watched the dry-room of Cornelius.

He had not been installed more than three days in his attic before all his doubts were removed.

From morning to sunset the flower-pot was in the window, and, like those charming female figures of Mieris and Metzys, Rosa appeared at that window as in a frame, formed by the first budding sprays of the wild vine and the honeysuckle encircling her window.

Rosa watched the flower-pot with an interest which betrayed to Boxtel the real value of the object enclosed in it.

This object could not be anything else but the second bulb, that is to say, the quintessence of all the hopes of the prisoner.

When the nights threatened to be too cold, Rosa took in the flower-pot.

Well, it was then quite evident she was following the instructions of Cornelius, who was afraid of the bulb being killed by frost.

When the sun became too hot, Rosa likewise took in the pot from eleven in the morning until two in the afternoon.

Another proof: Cornelius was afraid lest the soil should become too dry.

But when the first leaves peeped out of the earth Boxtel was fully convinced; and his telescope left him no longer in any uncertainty before they had grown one inch in height.

Cornelius possessed two bulbs, and the second was intrusted to the love and care of Rosa.

For it may well be imagined that the tender secret of the two lovers had not escaped the prying curiosity of Boxtel.

The question, therefore, was how to wrest the second bulb from the care of Rosa.

Certainly this was no easy task.

Rosa watched over her tulip as a mother over her child, or a dove over her eggs.

Rosa never left her room during the day, and, more than that, strange to say, she never left it in the evening.

For seven days Boxtel in vain watched Rosa; she was always at her post.

This happened during those seven days which made Cornelius so unhappy, depriving him at the same time of all news of Rosa and of his tulip.

Would the coolness between Rosa and Cornelius last for ever?

This would have made the theft much more difficult than Mynheer Isaac had at first expected.

We say the theft, for Isaac had simply made up his mind to steal the tulip; and as it grew in the most profound secrecy, and as, moreover, his word, being that of a renowned tulip-grower, would any day be taken against that of an unknown girl without any knowledge of horticulture, or against that of a prisoner convicted of high treason, he confidently hoped that, having once got possession of the bulb, he would be certain to obtain the prize; and then the tulip, instead of being called *Tulipa nigra Barlaensis*, would go down to posterity under the name of *Tulipa nigra Bortelensis* or *Bortellea*.

Mynheer Isaac had not yet quite decided which of these two names he would give to the tulip, but, as both meant the same thing, this was, after all, not the important point.

The point was to steal the tulip. But in order that Bortel might steal the tulip, it was necessary that Rosa should leave her room.

Great therefore was his joy when he saw the usual evening meetings of the lovers resumed.

He first of all took advantage of Rosa's absence to make himself fully acquainted with all the peculiarities of the door of her chamber. The lock was a double one, and in good order, but Rosa always took the key with her.

Bortel at first entertained an idea of stealing the key, but it soon occurred to him, not only that it would be exceedingly difficult to abstract it from her pocket, but also that, when she perceived her loss, she would not leave her room until the lock was changed, and then Bortel's first theft would be useless.

He thought it, therefore, better to employ a different

expedient. He collected as many keys as he could, and tried all of them during one of those delightful hours which Rosa and Cornelius passed together at the grating of the cell.

Two of the keys entered the lock, and one of them turned round once, but not the second time.

There was, therefore, only a little to be done to this key.

Boxtel covered it with a slight coat of wax, and when he thus renewed the experiment, the obstacle which prevented the key from being turned a second time left its impression on the wax.

It cost Boxtel two days more to bring his key to perfection, with the aid of a small file.

Rosa's door thus opened without noise and without difficulty, and Boxtel found himself in her room alone with the tulip.

The first guilty act of Boxtel had been to climb over a wall in order to dig up the tulip; the second, to introduce himself into the dry-room of Cornelius, through an open window; and the third, to enter Rosa's room by means of a false key.

Thus envy urged Boxtel on with rapid steps in the career of crime.

Boxtel, as we have said, was alone with the tulip.

A common thief would have taken the pot under his arm, and carried it off.

But Boxtel was not a common thief, and he reflected.

It was not yet certain, although very probable, that the tulip would flower black; if, therefore, he stole it now, he not only might be committing a useless crime, but also the theft might be discovered in the time which must elapse until the flower should open.

He therefore — as being in possession of the key, he might enter Rosa's chamber whenever he liked — thought it better to wait and to take it either an hour before or after opening, and to start on the instant to Haarlem, where

the tulip would be before the judges of the committee before any one else could put in a reclamation.

Should any one then reclaim it, Boxtel would in his turn charge him or her with theft.

This was a deep-laid scheme, and quite worthy of its author.

Thus, every evening during that delightful hour which the two lovers passed together at the grated window, Boxtel entered Rosa's chamber to watch the progress which the black tulip had made towards flowering.

On the evening at which we have arrived he was going to enter according to custom; but the two lovers, as we have seen, only exchanged a few words before Cornelius sent Rosa back to watch over the tulip.

Seeing Rosa enter her room ten minutes after she had left it, Boxtel guessed that the tulip had opened, or was about to open.

During that night, therefore, the great blow was to be struck. Boxtel presented himself before Gryphus with a double supply of Genièvre, that is to say, with a bottle in each pocket.

Gryphus being once fuddled, Boxtel was very nearly master of the house.

At eleven o'clock Gryphus was dead drunk. At two in the morning Boxtel saw Rosa leaving the chamber; but evidently she held in her arms something which she carried with great care.

He did not doubt that this was the black tulip which was in flower.

But what was she going to do with it? Would she set out that instant to Haarlem with it?

It was not possible that a young girl should undertake such a journey alone during the night.

Was she only going to show the tulip to Cornelius? This was more likely.

He followed Rosa in his stocking feet, walking on tiptoe.

He saw her approach the grated window. He heard her

calling Cornelius. By the light of the dark lantern he saw the tulip open, and black as the night in which he was hidden.

He heard the plan concerted between Cornelius and Rosa to send a messenger to Haarlem. He saw the lips of the lovers meet, and then heard Cornelius send Rosa away.

He saw Rosa extinguish the light and return to her chamber. Ten minutes after, he saw her leave the room again, and lock it twice.

Boxtel, who saw all this whilst hiding himself on the landing-place of the staircase above, descended step by step from his story as Rosa descended from hers ; so that, when she touched with her light foot the lowest step of the staircase, Boxtel touched with a still lighter hand the lock of Rosa's chamber.

And in that hand, it must be understood, he held the false key which opened Rosa's door as easily as did the real one.

And this is why, in the beginning of the chapter, we said that the poor young people were in great need of the protection of God.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE BLACK TULIP CHANGES MASTERS.

CORNELIUS remained standing on the spot where Rosa had left him. He was quite overpowered with the weight of his twofold happiness.

Half an hour passed away. Already did the first rays of the sun enter through the iron grating of the prison, when Cornelius was suddenly startled at the noise of steps which came up the staircase, and of cries which approached nearer and nearer.

Almost at the same instant he saw before him the pale and distracted face of Rosa.

He started, and turned pale with fright.

"Cornelius, Cornelius!" she screamed, gasping for breath.

"Good Heaven! what is it?" asked the prisoner.

"Cornelius! the tulip —"

"Well?"

"How shall I tell you?"

"Speak, speak, Rosa!"

"Some one has taken — stolen it from us."

"Stolen — taken?" said Cornelius.

"Yes," said Rosa, leaning against the door to support herself; "yes, taken, stolen!"

And saying this, she felt her limbs failing her, and she fell on her knees.

"But how? Tell me, explain to me."

"Oh, it is not my fault, my friend."

Poor Rosa! she no longer dared to call him "My beloved

"You have then left it alone," said Cornelius, ruefully.

"One minute only, to instruct our messenger, who lives scarcely fifty yards off, on the banks of the Waal."

"And during that time, notwithstanding all my injunctions, you left the key behind, unfortunate child!"

"No, no, no! this is what I cannot understand. The key was never out of my hands; I clinched it as if I were afraid it would take wings."

"But how did it happen, then?"

"That's what I cannot make out. I had given the letter to my messenger; he started before I left his house; I came home, and my door was locked; everything in my room was as I had left it, except the tulip, — that was gone. Some one must have had a key for my room, or have got a false one made on purpose."

She was nearly choking with sobs, and was unable to continue.

Cornelius, immovable and full of consternation, heard almost without understanding, and only muttered, —

"Stolen, stolen, and I am lost!"

"O Cornelius, forgive me, forgive me, it will kill me!"

Seeing Rosa's distress, Cornelius seized the iron bars of the grating, and furiously shaking them, called out, —

"Rosa, Rosa, we have been robbed, it is true, but shall we allow ourselves to be dejected for all that? No, no; the misfortune is great, but it may perhaps be remedied. Rosa, we know the thief!"

"Alas! what can I say about it?"

"But I say that it is no one else but that infamous Jacob. Shall we allow him to carry to Haarlem the fruit of our labour, the fruit of our sleepless nights, the child of our love? Rosa, we must pursue, we must overtake him!"

"But how can we do all this, my friend, without letting my father know we were in communication with each other? How should I, a poor girl, with so little knowledge of the world and its ways, be able to attain this end, which perhaps you could not attain yourself?"

"Rosa, Rosa, open this door to me, and you will see whether I will not find the thief,—whether I will not make him confess his crime and beg for mercy."

"Alas!" cried Rosa, sobbing, "can I open the door for you? have I the keys? If I had had them, would not you have been free long ago?"

"Your father has them,—your wicked father, who has already crushed the first bulb of my tulip. Oh, the wretch! he is an accomplice of Jacob!"

"Don't speak so loud, for Heaven's sake!"

"Oh, Rosa, if you don't open the door to me," Cornelius cried in his rage, "I shall force these bars, and kill everything I find in the prison."

"Be merciful, be merciful, my friend!"

"I tell you, Rosa, that I shall demolish this prison, stone for stone!" and the unfortunate man, whose strength was increased tenfold by his rage, began to shake the door with a great noise, little heeding that the thunder of his voice was re-echoing through the spiral staircase.

Rosa, in her fright, made vain attempts to check this furious outbreak.

"I tell you that I shall kill that infamous Gryphus?" roared Cornelius. "I tell you I shall shed his blood as he did that of my black tulip."

The wretched prisoner began really to rave.

"Well, then, yes," said Rosa, all in a tremble. "Yes, yes, only be quiet. Yes, yes, I will take his keys, I will open the door for you! Yes, only be quiet, my own dear Cornelius."

She did not finish her speech, as a growl by her side interrupted her.

"My father!" cried Rosa.

"Gryphus!" roared Van Baerle. "Oh, you villain!"

Old Gryphus, in the midst of all the noise, had ascended the staircase without being heard.

He rudely seized his daughter by the wrist.

"So you will take my keys?" he said, in a voice choked with rage. "Ah! this dastardly fellow, this monster, this

gallows-bird of a conspirator, is your own dear Cornelius, is he? Ah! Missy has communications with prisoners of state. Ah! won't I teach you, — won't I?"

Rosa clasped her hands in despair.

"Ah!" Gryphus continued, passing from the madness of anger to the cool irony of a man who has got the better of his enemy, — "Ah, you innocent tulip-fancier, you gentle scholar; you will kill me, and drink my blood! Very well! very well! And you have my daughter for an accomplice. Am I, forsooth, in a den of thieves, — in a cave of brigands? Yes; but the Governor shall know all to-morrow, and his Highness the Stadtholder the day after. We know the law, — we shall give a second edition of the Buytenhof, Master Scholar, and a good one this time. Yes, yes; just gnaw your paws like a bear in his cage, and you, my fine little lady, devour your dear Cornelius with your eyes. I tell you, my lambkins, you shall not much longer have the felicity of conspiring together. Away with you, unnatural daughter! And as to you, Master Scholar, we shall see each other again. Just be quiet, — we shall."

Rosa, beyond herself with terror and despair, kissed her hands to her friend; then, suddenly struck with a bright thought, she rushed toward the staircase, saying, —

"All is not yet lost, Cornelius. Rely on me, my Cornelius."

Her father followed her, growling.

As to poor Cornelius, he gradually loosened his hold of the bars, which his fingers still grasped convulsively. His head was heavy, his eyes almost started from their sockets, and he fell heavily on the floor of his cell, muttering, —

"Stolen! it has been stolen from me!"

During this time Boxtel had left the fortress by the door which Rosa herself had opened. He carried the black tulip wrapped up in a cloak, and, throwing himself into a coach, which was waiting for him at Gorcum, he drove off, without, as may well be imagined, having informed his friend Gryphus of his sudden departure.

And now, as we have seen him enter his coach, we shall, with the consent of the reader, follow him to the end of his journey.

He proceeded but slowly, as the black tulip could not bear travelling post-haste.

But Boxtel, fearing that he might not arrive early enough, procured at Delft a box, lined all round with fresh moss, in which he packed the tulip. The flower was so lightly pressed upon all sides, with a supply of air from above, that the coach could now travel full speed without any possibility of injury to the tulip.

He arrived next morning at Haarlem, fatigued but triumphant; and, to do away with every trace of the theft, he transplanted the tulip, and, breaking the original flower-pot, threw the pieces into the canal. After which he wrote the President of the Horticultural Society a letter, in which he announced to him that he had just arrived at Haarlem with a perfectly black tulip; and, with his flower all safe, took up his quarters at a good hotel in the town, and there he waited.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE PRESIDENT VAN SYSTEMS.

ROSA, on leaving Cornelius, had fixed on her plan, which was no other than to restore to Cornelius the stolen tulip, or never to see him again.

She had seen the despair of the prisoner, and she knew that it was derived from a double source, and that it was incurable.

On the one hand, separation became inevitable, — Gryphus having at the same time surprised the secret of their love and of their secret meetings.

On the other hand, all the hopes on the fulfilment of which Cornelius van Baerle had rested his ambition for the last seven years were now crushed.

Rosa was one of those women who are dejected by trifles, but who in great emergencies are supplied by the misfortune itself with the energy for combating or with the resources for remedying it.

She went to her room, and cast a last glance about her to see whether she had not been mistaken, and whether the tulip was not stowed away in some corner where it had escaped her notice. But she sought in vain; the tulip was still missing; the tulip was indeed stolen.

Rosa made up a little parcel of things indispensable for a journey; took her three hundred guilders, — that is to say, all her fortune, — fetched the third bulb from among her lace, where she had laid it up, and carefully hid it in her bosom; after which she locked her door twice, to disguise her flight as long as possible, and, leaving the prison by the same door which an hour before had let out Boxtel, she went to a stable-keeper to hire a carriage.

The man had only a two-wheel chaise, and this was the vehicle which Bortel had hired since last evening, and in which he was now driving along the road to Delft; for the road from Loewestein to Haarlem, owing to the many canals, rivers, and rivulets intersecting the country, is exceedingly circuitous.

Not being able to procure a vehicle, Rosa was obliged to take a horse, with which the stable-keeper readily intrusted her, knowing her to be the daughter of the jailer of the fortress.

Rosa hoped to overtake her messenger, a kind-hearted and honest lad, whom she would take with her, and who might at the same time serve her as a guide and a protector.

And in fact she had not proceeded more than a league before she saw him hastening along one of the side paths of a very pretty road by the river. Setting her horse off at a canter, she soon came up with him.

The honest lad was not aware of the important character of his message; nevertheless, he used as much speed as if he had known it; and in less than an hour he had already gone a league and a half.

Rosa took from him the note, which had now become useless, and explained to him what she wanted him to do for her. The boatman placed himself entirely at her disposal, promising to keep pace with the horse if Rosa would allow him to take hold of either the croup or the bridle of her horse. The two travellers had been on their way for five hours, and made more than eight leagues, and yet Gryphus had not the least suspicion of his daughter having left the fortress.

The jailer, who was of a very spiteful and cruel disposition, chuckled within himself at the idea of having struck such terror into his daughter's heart.

But whilst he was congratulating himself on having such a nice story to tell to his boon companion, Jacob, that worthy was on his road to Delft; and, thanks to the swift-

ness of the horse, had already the start of Rosa and her companion by four leagues.

And whilst the affectionate father was rejoicing at the thought of his daughter weeping in her room, Rosa was making the best of her way towards Haarlem.

Thus the prisoner alone was where Gryphus thought him to be.

Rosa was so little with her father since she took care of the tulip, that at his dinner hour, that is to say, at twelve o'clock, he was reminded for the first time by his appetite that his daughter was fretting rather too long.

He sent one of the under-turnkeys to call her ; and, when the man came back to tell him that he had called and sought her in vain, he resolved to go and call her himself.

He first went to her room, but, loud as he knocked, Rosa answered not.

The locksmith of the fortress was sent for ; he opened the door, but Gryphus no more found Rosa than she had found the tulip.

At that very moment she entered Rotterdam.

Gryphus therefore had just as little chance of finding her in the kitchen as in her room, and just as little in the garden as in the kitchen.

The reader may imagine the anger of the jailer when, after having made inquiries about the neighbourhood, he heard that his daughter had hired a horse, and, like an adventuress, set out on a journey without saying where she was going.

Gryphus again went up in his fury to Van Baerle, abused him, threatened him, knocked all the miserable furniture of his cell about, and promised him all sorts of misery, even starvation and flogging.

Cornelius, without even hearing what his jailer said, allowed himself to be ill-treated, abused, and threatened, remaining all the while sullen, immovable, dead to every emotion and fear.

After having sought for Rosa in every direction, Gryphus

looked out for Jacob ; and, as he could not find him either, he began to suspect from that moment that Jacob had run away with her.

The damsel, meanwhile, after having stopped for two hours at Rotterdam, had started again on her journey. On that evening she slept at Delft, and on the following morning she reached Haarlem, four hours after Boxtel had arrived there.

Rosa, first of all, caused herself to be led before Mynheer van Systens, the President of the Horticultural Society of Haarlem.

She found that worthy gentleman in a situation which, to do justice to our story, we must not pass over in our description.

The President was drawing up a report to the committee of the society.

This report was written on large-sized paper, in the finest handwriting of the President.

Rosa was announced simply as Rosa Gryphus ; but as her name, well as it might sound, was unknown to the President, she was refused admittance.

Rosa, however, was by no means abashed, having vowed in her heart, in pursuing her cause, not to allow herself to be put down either by refusal, or abuse, or even brutality.

"Announce to the President," she said to the servant, "that I want to speak to him about the black tulip."

These words seemed to be an "Open Sesame," for she soon found herself in the office of the President, Van Systens, who gallantly rose from his chair to meet her.

He was a spare little man, resembling the stem of a flower, his head forming its chalice, and his two limp arms representing the double leaf of the tulip ; the resemblance was rendered complete by his waddling gait, which made him even more like that flower when it bends under a breeze.

"Well, miss," he said, "you are coming, I am told, about the affair of the black tulip."

To the President of the Horticultural Society the *Tulipa nigra* was a first-rate power, which, in its character as queen of the tulips, might send ambassadors.

"Yes, sir," answered Rosa; "I come at least to speak of it."

"Is it doing well, then?" asked Van Systems, with a smile of tender veneration.

"Alas! sir, I don't know," said Rosa.

"How is that? could any misfortune have happened to it?"

"A very great one, sir; yet not to it, but to me."

"What?"

"It has been stolen from me."

"Stolen! the black tulip?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you know the thief?"

"I have my suspicions, but I must not yet accuse any one."

"But the matter may very easily be ascertained."

"How is that?"

"As it has been stolen from you, the thief cannot be far off."

"Why not?"

"Because I have seen the black tulip only two hours ago."

"You have seen the black tulip!" cried Rosa, rushing up to Mynheer van Systems.

"As I see you, miss."

"But where?"

"Well, with your master, of course."

"With my master?"

"Yes, are you not in the service of Master Isaac Boxtel?"

"I?"

"Yes, you."

"But for whom do you take me, sir?"

"And for whom do you take me?"

"I hope, sir, I take you for what you are, — that is to say, for the honorable Mynheer van Systems, Burgomaster of Haarlem, and President of the Horticultural Society."

"And what is it you told me just now?"

"I told you, sir, that my tulip has been stolen."

"Then your tulip is that of Mynheer Boxtel. Well, my child, you express yourself very badly. The tulip has been stolen, not from you, but from Mynheer Boxtel."

"I repeat to you, sir, that I do not know who this Mynheer Boxtel is, and that I have now heard his name pronounced for the first time."

"You do not know who Mynheer Boxtel is, and you also had a black tulip?"

"But is there any other besides mine?" asked Rosa, trembling.

"Yes, — that of Mynheer Boxtel."

"How is it?"

"Black, of course."

"Without speck?"

"Without a single speck, or even point."

"And you have this tulip, — you have it deposited here?"

"No, but it will be, as it has to be exhibited before the committee previous to the prize being awarded."

"Oh, sir!" cried Rosa, "this Boxtel — this Isaac Boxtel — who calls himself the owner of the black tulip —"

"And who is its owner?"

"Is he not a very thin man?"

"Yes."

"Bald?"

"Yes."

"With sunken eyes?"

"I think he has."

"Restless, stooping, and bowlegged?"

"In truth, you draw Master Boxtel's portrait feature by feature."

"And the tulip, sir? Is it not in a pot of white and

blue earthenware, with yellowish flowers in a basket on three sides?"

"Oh, as to that I am not quite sure; I looked more at the flower than at the pot."

"Oh, sir! that's my tulip, which has been stolen from me. I came here to reclaim it before you and from you."

"Oh! oh!" said Van Systems, looking at Rosa. "What! you are here to claim the tulip of Master Boxtel? Well, I must say, you are cool enough."

"Honoured sir," a little put out by this apostrophe, "I do not say that I am coming to claim the tulip of Master Boxtel, but to reclaim my own."

"Yours?"

"Yes, the one which I have myself planted and nursed."

"Well, then, go and find out Master Boxtel, at the White Swan Inn, and you can then settle matters with him; as for me, considering that the cause seems to me as difficult to judge as that which was brought before King Solomon, and that I do not pretend to be as wise as he was, I shall content myself with making my report, establishing the existence of the black tulip, and ordering the hundred thousand guilders be paid to its grower. Good bye, my child."

"Oh, sir, sir!" said Rosa, imploringly.

"Only, my child," continued Van Systems, "as you are young and pretty, and as there may be still some good in you, I'll give you some good advice. Be prudent in this matter, for we have a court of justice and a prison here at Haarlem; and, moreover, we are exceedingly ticklish as far as the honour of our tulips is concerned. Go, my child, go, remember, Master Isaac Boxtel at the White Swan Inn."

And Mynheer van Systems, taking up his fine pen, resumed his report, which had been interrupted by Rosa's visit.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A MEMBER OF THE HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY.

ROSA, beyond herself and nearly mad with joy and fear at the idea of the black tulip being found again, started for the White Swan, followed by the boatman, a stout lad from Frisia, who was strong enough to knock down a dozen Boxtels single-handed.

He had been made acquainted in the course of the journey with the state of affairs, and was not afraid of any encounter; only he had orders, in such a case, to spare the tulip.

But on arriving in the great market-place Rosa at once stopped; a sudden thought had struck her, just as Homer's Minerva seizes Achilles by the hair at the moment when he is about to be carried away by his anger.

"Good Heaven!" she muttered to herself, "I have made a grievous blunder; it may be I have ruined Cornelius, the tulip, and myself. I have given the alarm, and perhaps awakened suspicion. I am but a woman; these men may league themselves against me, and then I shall be lost. If I am lost that matters nothing, — but Cornelius and the tulip!"

She reflected for a moment.

"If I go to that Boxtel, and do not know him; if that Boxtel is not my Jacob, but another fancier, who has also discovered the black tulip; or if my tulip has been stolen by some one else, or has already passed into the hands of a third person; — if I do not recognise the man, only the tulip, how shall I prove that it belongs to me? On the other hand, if I recognise this Boxtel as Jacob, who knows

what will come out of it? whilst we are contesting with each other, the tulip will die."

In the mean while a great noise was heard, like the distant roar of the sea, at the other extremity of the marketplace. People were running about, doors opening and shutting; Rosa alone was unconscious of all this hubbub among the multitude.

"We must return to the President," she muttered.

"Well, then, let us return," said the boatman.

They took a small street, which led them straight to the mansion of Mynheer van Systems, who with his best pen in his finest hand continued to draw up his report.

Everywhere on her way Rosa heard people speaking only of the black tulip, and the prize of a hundred thousand guilders. The news had spread like wildfire through the town.

Rosa had not a little difficulty in penetrating a second time into the office of Mynheer van Systems, who, however, was again moved by the magic name of the black tulip.

But when he recognised Rosa, whom in his own mind he had set down as mad, or even worse, he grew angry, and wanted to send her away.

Rosa, however, clasped her hands, and said, with that tone of honest truth which generally finds its way to the hearts of men, —

"For Heaven's sake, sir, do not turn me away; listen to what I have to tell you, and if it be not possible for you to do me justice, at least you will not one day have to reproach yourself before God for having made yourself the accomplice of a bad action."

Van Systems stamped his foot with impatience; it was the second time that Rosa interrupted him in the midst of a composition which stimulated his vanity, both as a burgomaster and as President of the Horticultural Society.

"But my report!" he cried, — "my report on the black tulip!"

"Mynheer van Systens," Rosa continued, with the firmness of innocence and truth, "your report on the black tulip will, if you don't hear me, be based on crime or on falsehood. I implore you, sir, let this Master Boxtel, whom I assert to be Master Jacob, be brought here before you and me, and I swear that I will leave him in undisturbed possession of the tulip if I do not recognise the flower and its holder."

"Well, I declare, here is a proposal," said Van Systens.

"What do you mean?"

"I ask you what can be proved by your recognising them?"

"After all," said Rosa, in her despair, "you are an honest man, sir; how would you feel if one day you found out that you had given the prize to a man for something which he not only had not produced, but which he had even stolen?"

Rosa's speech seemed to have brought a certain conviction into the heart of Van Systens, and he was going to answer her in a gentler tone, when at once a great noise was heard in the street, and loud cheers shook the house.

"What is this?" cried the burgomaster; "what is this? Is it possible? have I heard aright?"

And he rushed towards his anteroom, without any longer heeding Rosa, whom he left in his cabinet.

Scarcely had he reached his anteroom when he cried out aloud, on seeing his staircase invaded, up to the very landing-place, by the multitude, which was accompanying, or rather following, a young man, simply clad in a violet-coloured velvet, embroidered with silver; who, with a certain aristocratic slowness, ascended the white stone steps of the house.

In his wake followed two officers, one of the navy, and the other of the cavalry.

Van Systens, having found his way through the frightened domestics, began to bow, almost to prostrate himself before his visitor, who had been the cause of all this stir.

"Monseigneur!" he called out, "Monseigneur! What distinguished honour is your Highness bestowing for ever on my humble house by your visit!"

"Dear Mynheer van Systens," said William of Orange, with a serenity which, with him, took the place of a smile, "I am a true Hollander; I am fond of the water, of beer, and of flowers, sometimes even of that cheese the flavour of which seems so grateful to the French; the flower which I prefer to all others is, of course, the tulip. I heard at Leyden that the city of Haarlem at last possessed the black tulip; and, after having satisfied myself of the truth of news which seemed so incredible, I have come to know all about it from the President of the Horticultural Society."

"Oh, Monseigneur, Monseigneur!" said Van Systens, "what glory to the society if its endeavours are pleasing to your Highness!"

"Have you got the flower here?" said the Prince, who, very likely, already regretted having made such a long speech.

"I am sorry to say we have not."

"And where is it?"

"With its owner."

"Who is he?"

"An honest tulip-grower of Dort."

"His name?"

"Boxtel."

"His quarters?"

"At the White Swan; I shall send for him, and if in the mean while your Highness will do me the honour of stepping into my drawing-room, he will be sure — knowing that your Highness is here — to lose no time in bringing his tulip."

"Very well, send for him."

"Yes, your Highness, but —"

"What is it?"

"Oh, nothing of any consequence, Monseigneur."

"Everything is of consequence, Mynheer van Systems."

"Well, then, Monseigneur, if it must be said, a little difficulty has presented itself."

"What difficulty?"

"This tulip has already been claimed by usurpers. It's true that it is worth a hundred thousand guilders."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, Monseigneur, by usurpers, by forgers."

"This is a crime, Mynheer van Systems."

"So it is, your Highness."

"And have you any proofs of their guilt?"

"No, Monseigneur, the guilty woman —"

"The guilty woman, Sir?"

"I ought to say, the woman who claims the tulip, Monseigneur, is here in the room close by."

"And what do you think of her?"

"I think, Monseigneur, that the bait of a hundred thousand guilders may have tempted her."

"And so she claims the tulip?"

"Yes, Monseigneur."

"And what proof does she offer?"

"I was just going to question her when your Highness came in."

"Question her, Mynheer van Systems, question her. I am the first magistrate of the country; I will hear the case and administer justice."

"I have found my King Solomon," said Van Systems, bowing, and showing the way to the Prince.

His Highness was just going to walk ahead, but, suddenly recollecting himself, he said, —

"Go before me, and call me plain Mynheer."

The two then entered the cabinet.

Rosa was still standing at the same place, leaning on the window, and looking through the panes into the garden.

"Ah! a Frisian girl," said the Prince, as he observed Rosa's gold brocade headdress and red petticoat.

At the noise of their footsteps she turned round, but

scarcely saw the Prince, who seated himself in the darkest corner of the apartment.

All her attention, as may be easily imagined, was fixed on that important person who was called Van Systens, so that she had no time to notice the humble stranger who was following the master of the house, and who, for aught she knew, might be somebody or nobody.

The humble stranger took a book down from the shelf, and made Van Systens a sign to commence the examination forthwith.

Van Systens, likewise at the invitation of the young man in the violet coat, sat down in his turn, and, quite happy and proud of the importance thus cast upon him began,—

“My child, you promise to tell me the truth and the entire truth concerning this tulip?”

“I promise.”

“Well, then, speak before this gentleman; this gentleman is one of the members of the Horticultural Society.”

“What am I to tell you, sir,” said Rosa, “beside that which I have told you already?”

“Well, then, what is it?”

“I repeat the question which I have addressed to you before.”

“Which?”

“That you will order Mynheer Bortel to come here with his tulip. If I do not recognise it as mine I will frankly tell it; but if I do recognise it I will reclaim it, even if I go before his Highness, the Stadtholder himself, with my proofs in my hands.”

“You have, then, some proofs, my child?”

“God, who knows my good right, will assist me to some.”

Van Systens exchanged a look with the Prince, who, since the first words of Rosa, seemed to try to remember her, as if it were not for the first time that this sweet voice rang in his ears.

An officer went off to fetch Bortel, and Van Systens in the mean while continued his examination.

"And with what do you support your assertion that you are the real owner of the black tulip?"

"With the very simple fact of my having planted and grown it in my own chamber."

"In your chamber? Where was your chamber?"

"At Loewestein."

"You are from Loewestein?"

"I am the daughter of the jailer of the fortress."

The Prince made a little movement, as much as to say, "Well, that's it, I remember now."

And, all the while feigning to be engaged with his book, he watched Rosa with even more attention than he had before.

"And you are fond of flowers?" continued Mynheer van Systems.

"Yes, sir."

"Then you are an experienced florist, I dare say?"

Rosa hesitated a moment; then with a tone which came from the depth of her heart, she said, —

"Gentlemen, I am speaking to men of honor."

There was such an expression of truth in the tone of her voice, that Van Systems and the Prince answered simultaneously by an affirmative movement of their heads.

"Well, then, I am not an experienced florist; I am only a poor girl, one of the people, who, three months ago, knew neither how to read nor how to write. No, the black tulip has not been found by myself."

"But by whom else?"

"By a poor prisoner of Loewestein."

"By a prisoner of Loewestein?" repeated the Prince.

The tone of his voice startled Rosa, who was sure she had heard it before.

"By a prisoner of state, then," continued the Prince, "as there are none else there."

Having said this he began to read again, at least in appearance.

"Yes," said Rosa, with a faltering voice, "yes, by a prisoner of state."

Van Systens trembled as he heard such a confession made in the presence of such a witness.

"Continue," said William dryly, to the President of the Horticultural Society.

"Ah, sir," said Rosa, addressing the person whom she thought to be her real judge, "I am going to incriminate myself very seriously."

"Certainly," said Van Systens, "the prisoner of state ought to be kept in close confinement at Loewestein."

"Alas ! sir."

"And from what you tell me you took advantage of your position, as daughter of the jailer, to communicate with a prisoner of state about the cultivation of flowers."

"So it is, sir," Rosa murmured in dismay ; "yes, I am bound to confess, I saw him every day."

"Unfortunate girl !" exclaimed Van Systens.

The Prince, observing the fright of Rosa and the pallor of the President, raised his head, and said, in his clear and decided tone, —

"This cannot signify anything to the members of the Horticultural Society ; they have to judge on the black tulip, and have no cognizance to take of political offences. Go on, young woman, go on."

Van Systens, by means of an eloquent glance, offered, in the name of the tulip, his thanks to the new member of the Horticultural Society.

Rosa, reassured by this sort of encouragement which the stranger was giving her, related all that had happened for the last three months, all that she had done, and all that she had suffered. She described the cruelty of Gryphus ; the destruction of the first bulb ; the grief of the prisoner ; the precautions taken to insure the success of the second bulb ; the patience of the prisoner, and his anxiety during their separation : how he was about to starve himself because he had no longer any news of his tulip ; his joy when she went to see him again ; and, lastly, their despair when they found that the tulip which had come into flower was stolen just one hour after it had opened.

All this was detailed with an accent of truth which, although producing no change in the impassible mien of the Prince, did not fail to take effect on Van Systemen.

"But," said the Prince, "it cannot be long since you knew the prisoner."

Rosa opened her large eyes and looked at the stranger, who drew back into the dark corner, as if he wished to escape her observation.

"Why, sir?" she asked him.

"Because it is not yet four months since the jailer Gryphus and his daughter were removed to Loewestein."

"That is true, sir."

"Otherwise, you must have solicited the transfer of your father, in order to be able to follow some prisoner who may have been transported from the Hague to Loewestein."

"Sir," said Rosa, blushing.

"Finish what you have to say," said William.

"I confess I knew the prisoner at the Hague."

"Happy prisoner!" said William, smiling.

At this moment the officer who had been sent for Bortel returned, and announced to the Prince that the person whom he had been to fetch was following on his heels with his tulip.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE THIRD BULB.

BOXTEL's return was scarcely announced, when he entered in person the drawing-room of Mynheer van Systems, followed by two men, who carried in a box their precious burden and deposited it on a table.

The Prince, on being informed, left the cabinet, passed into the drawing-room, admired the flower, and silently resumed his seat in the dark corner, where he had himself placed his chair.

Rosa, trembling, pale and terrified, expected to be invited in her turn to see the tulip.

She now heard the voice of Boxel.

"It is he!" she exclaimed.

The Prince made her a sign to go and look through the open door into the drawing-room.

"It is my tulip," cried Rosa, "I recognise it. Oh, my poor Cornelius!"

And saying this she burst into tears.

The Prince rose from his seat, went to the door, where he stood for some time with the full light falling upon his figure.

As Rosa's eyes now rested upon him, she felt more than ever convinced that this was not the first time she had seen the stranger.

"Master Boxel," said the Prince, "come in here, if you please."

Boxel eagerly approached, and, finding himself face to face with William of Orange, started back.

"His Highness!" he called out.

"His Highness!" Rosa repeated in dismay.

Hearing this exclamation on his left, Boxtel turned round, and perceived Rosa.

At this sight the whole frame of the thief shook as if under the influence of a galvanic shock.

"Ah!" muttered the Prince to himself, "he is confused."

But Boxtel making a violent effort to control his feelings, was already himself again.

"Master Boxtel," said William, "you seem to have discovered the secret of growing the black tulip?"

"Yes, your Highness," answered Boxtel, in a voice which still betrayed some confusion.

It is true his agitation might have been attributable to the emotion which the man must have felt on suddenly recognising the Prince.

"But," continued the Stadtholder, "here is a young damsel who also pretends to have found it."

Boxtel, with a disdainful smile, shrugged his shoulders.

William watched all his movements with evident interest and curiosity.

"Then you don't know this young girl?" said the Prince.

"No, your Highness!"

"And you, child, do you know Master Boxtel?"

"No; I don't know Master Boxtel, but I know Master Jacob."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean to say that at Loewestein the man who here calls himself Isaac Boxtel went by the name of Master Jacob."

"What do you say to that, Master Boxtel?"

"I say that this damsel lies, your Highness."

"You deny, therefore, having ever been at Loewestein?"

Boxtel hesitated; the fixed and searching glance of the proud eye of the Prince prevented him from lying.

"I cannot deny having been at Loewestein, your Highness, but I deny having stolen the tulip."

"You have stolen it, and that from my room," cried Rosa, with indignation.

"I deny it."

"Now listen to me. Do you deny having followed me into the garden, on the day when I prepared the border where I was to plant it? Do you deny having followed me into the garden when I pretended to plant it? Do you deny that, on that evening, you rushed after my departure to the spot where you hoped to find the bulb? Do you deny having dug in the ground with your hands, — but thank God! in vain; as it was a stratagem to discover your intentions. Say, do you deny all this?"

Boxtel did not deem it fit to answer these several charges, but, turning to the Prince, continued, —

"I have now for twenty years grown tulips at Dort. I have even acquired some reputation in this art; one of my hybrids is entered in the catalogue under the name of an illustrious personage. I have dedicated it to the King of Portugal. The truth in the matter is as I shall now tell your Highness. This damsel knew that I had produced the black tulip, and, in concert with a lover of hers in the fortress of Loewestein, she formed the plan of ruining me by appropriating to herself the prize of a hundred thousand guilders, which, with the help of your Highness's justice, I hope to gain."

"Yah!" cried Rosa, beyond herself with anger.

"Silence!" said the Prince.

Then, turning to Boxtel, he said, —

"And who is that prisoner to whom you allude as the lover of this young woman?"

Rosa nearly swooned, for Cornelius was designated as a dangerous prisoner, and recommended by the Prince to the especial surveillance of the jailer.

Nothing could have been more agreeable to Boxtel than this question.

"This prisoner," he said, "is a man whose name in itself will prove to your Highness what trust you may place

in his probity. He is a prisoner of state, who was once condemned to death."

"And his name?"

Rosa hid her face in her hands with a movement of despair.

"His name is Cornelius van Baerle," said Boxtel, "and he is godson of that villain Cornelius de Witt."

The Prince gave a start, his generally quiet eye flashed, and a death-like paleness spread over his impassible features.

He went up to Rosa, and with his finger, gave her a sign to remove her hands from her face.

Rosa obeyed, as if under mesmeric influence, without having seen the sign.

"It was, then, to follow this man that you came to me at Leyden to solicit for the transfer of your father?"

Rosa hung down her head, and, nearly choking, said, —

"Yes, your Highness."

"Go on," said the Prince to Boxtel.

"I have nothing more to say," Isaac continued. "Your Highness knows all. But there is one thing which I did not intend to say, because I did not wish to make this girl blush for her ingratitude. I came to Loewestein because I had business there. On this occasion I made the acquaintance of old Gryphus, and, falling in love with his daughter, made an offer of marriage to her; and, not being rich, I committed the imprudence of mentioning to them my prospect of gaining a hundred thousand guilders, in proof of which I showed to them the black tulip. Her lover, having himself made a show at Dort of cultivating tulips to hide his political intrigues, they now plotted together for my ruin. On the eve of the day when the flower was expected to open, the tulip was taken away by this young woman. She carried it to her room, from which I had the good luck to recover it at the very moment when she had the impudence to despatch a messenger to announce to the members of the Horticultural Society that she had produced the grand black tulip.

But she did not stop there. There is no doubt that, during the few hours which she kept the flower in her room, she showed it to some persons whom she may now call as witnesses. But, fortunately, your Highness has now been warned against this impostor and her witnesses."

"Oh, my God, my God! what infamous falsehoods!" said Rosa, bursting into tears, and throwing herself at the feet of the Stadtholder, who, although thinking her guilty, felt pity for her dreadful agony.

"You have done very wrong, my child," he said, "and your lover shall be punished for having thus badly advised you. For you are so young, and have such an honest look, that I am inclined to believe the mischief to have been his doing, and not yours."

"Monseigneur! Monseigneur!" cried Rosa, "Cornelius is not guilty."

William started.

"Not guilty of having advised you? that's what you want to say, is it not?"

"What I wish to say, your Highness, is that Cornelius is as little guilty of the second crime imputed to him as he was of the first."

"Of the first? And do you know what was his first crime? Do you know of what he was accused and convicted? Of having, as an accomplice of Cornelius de Witt, concealed the correspondence of the Grand Pensionary and the Marquis de Louvois."

"Well, sir, he was ignorant of this correspondence being deposited with him; completely ignorant. I am as certain as of my life, that, if it were not so, he would have told me; for how could that pure mind have harboured a secret without revealing it to me? No, no, your Highness, I repeat it, and even at the risk of incurring your displeasure, Cornelius is no more guilty of the first crime than of the second; and of the second no more than of the first. Oh, would to Heaven that you knew my Cornelius, Monseigneur!"

"He is a De Witt!" cried Boxtel. "His Highness

knows only too much of him, having once granted him his life."

"Silence!" said the Prince; "all these affairs of state, as I have already said, are completely out of the province of the Horticultural Society of Haarlem."

Then, knitting his brow, he added, —

"As to the tulip, make yourself easy, Master Boxtel, you shall have justice done to you."

Boxtel bowed with a heart full of joy, and received the congratulations of the President.

"You, my child," William of Orange continued, "you were going to commit a crime. I will not punish you; but the real evil-doer shall pay the penalty for both. A man of his name may be a conspirator, and even a traitor, but he ought not to be a thief."

"A thief!" cried Rosa. "Cornelius a thief? Pray, your Highness, do not say such a word; it would kill him, if he knew it. If theft there has been, I swear to you, Sir, no one else but this man has committed it."

"Prove it," Boxtel coolly remarked.

"I shall prove it. With God's help I shall."

Then, turning towards Boxtel, she asked, —

"The tulip is yours?"

"It is."

"How many bulbs were there of it?"

Boxtel hesitated for a moment, but after a short consideration he came to the conclusion that she would not ask this question if there were none besides the two bulbs of which he had known already. He therefore answered, —

"Three."

"What has become of these bulbs?"

"Oh! what has become of them? Well, one has failed; the second has produced the black tulip."

"And the third?"

"The third!"

"The third, — where is it?"

"I have it at home," said Boxtel, quite confused.

"At home? Where? At Loewestein, or at Dort?"

"At Dort," said Boxtel.

"You lie!" cried Rosa. "Monseigneur," she continued, whilst turning round to the Prince, "I will tell you the true story of these three bulbs. The first was crushed by my father in the prisoner's cell, and this man is quite aware of it, for he himself wanted to get hold of it, and, being balked in his hope, he very nearly fell out with my father, who had been the cause of his disappointment. The second bulb, planted by me, has produced the black tulip; and the third and last" — saying this, she drew it from her bosom — "here it is, in the very same paper in which it was wrapped up together with the two others. When about to be led to the scaffold, Cornelius van Baerle gave me all the three. Take it, Monseigneur, take it."

And Rosa, unfolding the paper, offered the bulb to the Prince, who took it from her hands and examined it.

"But Monseigneur, this young woman may have stolen the bulb, as she did the tulip," Boxtel said, with a faltering voice, and evidently alarmed at the attention with which the Prince examined the bulb; and even more at the movements of Rosa, who was reading some lines written on the paper which remained in her hands.

Her eyes suddenly lighted up; she read, with breathless anxiety, the mysterious paper over and over again; and at last, uttering a cry, held it out to the Prince and said, —

"Read, Monseigneur, for Heaven's sake, read!"

William handed the third bulb to Van Systens, took the paper, and read.

No sooner had he looked at it than he began to stagger; his hand trembled, and very nearly let the paper fall to the ground; and the expression of pain and compassion in his features was really frightful to see.

It was that fly leaf, taken from the Bible, which Cornelius de Witt had sent to Dort by Craeke, the servant of his brother John, to request Van Baerle to burn the correspondence of the Grand Pensionary with the Marquis de Louvois.

This request, as the reader may remember, was couched in the following terms:—

“MY DEAR GODSON,—

“Burn the parcel which I have intrusted to you. Burn it without looking at it, and without opening it, so that its contents may for ever remain unknown to yourself. Secrets of this description are death to those with whom they are deposited. Burn it, and you will have saved John and Cornelius de Witt.

“Farewell, and love me.

“CORNELIUS DE WITT.

“August 20, 1672.”

This slip of paper offered the proofs both of Van Baerle's innocence and of his claim to the property of the tulip.

Rosa and the Stadtholder exchanged one look only.

That of Rosa was meant to express, “Here, you see yourself.”

That of the Stadtholder signified, “Be quiet, and wait.”

The Prince wiped the cold sweat from his forehead, and slowly folded up the paper, whilst his thoughts were wandering in that labyrinth without a goal and without a guide, which is called remorse and shame for the past.

Soon, however, raising his head with an effort, he said, in his usual voice,—

“Go, Mr. Boxtel; justice shall be done, I promise you.”

Then, turning to the President, he added,—

“You, my dear Mynheer van Systems, take charge of this young woman and of the tulip. Good-by.”

All bowed, and the Prince left, among the deafening cheers of the crowd outside.

Boxtel returned to his inn, rather puzzled and uneasy, tormented by misgivings about that paper which William had received from the hand of Rosa, and which his Highness had read, folded up, and so carefully put in his pocket. What was the meaning of all this?

Rosa went up to the tulip, tenderly kissed its leaves, and, with a heart full of happiness and confidence in the ways of God, broke out in the words, —

“Thou knowest best for what end Thou madest my good Cornelius teach me to read.”

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE HYMN OF THE FLOWERS.

WHILST the events we have described in our last chapter were taking place, the unfortunate Van Baerle, forgotten in his cell in the fortress of Loewestein, suffered at the hands of Gryphus all that a prisoner can suffer when his jailer has formed the determination of playing the part of hangman.

Gryphus, not having received any tidings of Rosa or of Jacob, persuaded himself that all that had happened was the devil's work, and that Dr. Cornelius van Baerle had been sent on earth by Satan.

The result of it was, that, one fine morning, the third after the disappearance of Jacob and Rosa, he went up to the cell of Cornelius in even a greater rage than usual.

The latter, leaning with his elbows on the window-sill, and supporting his head with his two hands, whilst his eyes wandered over the distant hazy horizon where the wind-mills of Dort were turning their sails, was breathing the fresh air, in order to be able to keep down his tears and to fortify himself in his philosophy.

The pigeons were still there, but hope was not there; there was no future to look forward to.

Alas! Rosa, being watched, was no longer able to come. Could she not write? and if so, could she convey her letters to him?

No, no. He had seen during the two preceding days too much fury and malignity in the eyes of old Gryphus to expect that his vigilance would relax, even for one moment. Moreover, had not she to suffer even worse torments than

those of seclusion and separation? Did this brutal, blaspheming, drunken bully take revenge on his daughter, like the ruthless fathers of the Greek drama? And when the Genièvre had heated his brain, would it not give to his arm, which had been only too well set by Cornelius, even double force?

The idea that Rosa might perhaps be ill-treated nearly drove Cornelius mad.

He then felt his own powerlessness. He asked himself whether God was just in inflicting so much tribulation on two innocent creatures. And certainly in these moments he began to doubt the wisdom of Providence. It is one of the curses of misfortune that it thus begets doubt.

Van Baerle had proposed to write to Rosa, but where was she?

He also would have wished to write to the Hague to be beforehand with Gryphus, who, he had no doubt, would by denouncing him do his best to bring new storms on his head.

But how should he write? Gryphus had taken the paper and pencil from him; and even if he had both, he could hardly expect Gryphus to despatch his letter.

Then Cornelius revolved in his mind all those stratagems resorted to by unfortunate prisoners.

He had thought of an attempt to escape, a thing which never entered his head whilst he could see Rosa every day; but the more he thought of it, the more clearly he saw the impracticability of such an attempt. He was one of those choice spirits who abhor everything that is common, and who often lose a good chance through not taking the way of the vulgar, that high road of mediocrity which leads to everything.

"How is it possible," said Cornelius to himself, "that I should escape from Loewestein, as Grotius has done the same thing before me? Has not every precaution been taken since? Are not the windows barred? Are not the doors of double and even of treble strength, and the sen-

tinels ten times more watchful? And have not I, besides all this, an Argus so much the more dangerous as he has the keen eyes of hatred? Finally, is there not one fact which takes away all my spirit, — I mean Rosa's absence? But suppose I should waste ten years of my life in making a file to file off my bars, or in braiding cords to let myself down from the window, or in sticking wings on my shoulders to fly, like Dædalus? But luck is against me now. The file would get dull, the rope would break, or my wings would melt in the sun; I should surely kill myself; I should be picked up maimed and crippled; I should be labelled, and put on exhibition in the museum at the Hague between the blood-stained doublet of William the Taciturn and the female walrus captured at Stavesen, and the only result of my enterprise will have been to procure me a place among the curiosities of Holland.

"But no; and it is much better so. Some fine day Gryphus will commit some atrocity. I am losing my patience, since I have lost the joy and company of Rosa, and especially since I have lost my tulip. Undoubtedly, some day or other Gryphus will attack me in a manner painful to my self-respect, or to my love, or even threaten my personal safety. I don't know how it is, but since my imprisonment I feel a strange and almost irresistible pugnacity. Well, I shall get at the throat of that old villain, and strangle him."

Cornelius at these words stopped for a moment, biting his lips and staring out before him; then, eagerly returning to an idea which seemed to possess a strange fascination for him, he continued, —

"Well, and once having strangled him, why should I not take his keys from him, why not go down the stairs as if I had done the most virtuous action, why not go and fetch Rosa from her room, why not tell her all, and jump from her window into the Waal? I am expert enough as a swimmer to save both of us. Rosa, — but oh Heaven, Gryphus is her father! Whatever may be her affection for me,

she will never approve of my having strangled her father, brutal and malicious as he has been.

"I shall have to enter into an argument with her; and in the midst of my speech some wretched turnkey who has found Gryphus with the death-rattle in his throat, or perhaps actually dead, will come along and put his hand on my shoulder. Then I shall see the Buytenhof again, and the gleam of that infernal sword,—which will not stop half-way a second time, but will make acquaintance with the nape of my neck.

"It will not do, Cornelius, my fine fellow, — it is a bad plan. But, then, what is to become of me, and how shall I find Rosa again?"

Such were the cogitations of Cornelius three days after the sad scene of separation from Rosa, at the moment when we find him standing at the window.

And at that very moment Gryphus entered.

He held in his hand a huge stick; his eyes glistening with spiteful thoughts, a malignant smile played round his lips, and the whole of his carriage, and even all his movements, betokened bad and malicious intentions.

Cornelius heard him enter, and guessed that it was he, but did not turn round, as he knew well that Rosa was not coming after him.

There is nothing more galling to angry people than the coolness of those on whom they wish to vent their spleen.

The expense being once incurred, one does not like to lose it; one's passion is roused, and one's blood boiling, so it would be labor lost not to have at least a nice little row.

Gryphus, therefore, on seeing that Cornelius did not stir, tried to attract his attention by a loud —

"Umph, umph!"

Cornelius was humming between his teeth the "Hymn of Flowers," — a sad but very charming song, —

"We are the daughters of the secret fire,
Of the fire which runs through the veins of the earth ;
We are the daughters of Aurora and of the dew ;
We are the daughters of the air ;
We are the daughters of the water ;
But we are, above all, the daughters of heaven."

This song, the placid melancholy of which was still heightened by its calm and sweet melody, exasperated Gryphus.

He struck his stick on the stone pavement of the cell, and called out, —

"Halloa ! my warbling gentleman, don't you hear me ?"

Cornelius turned round, merely saying, "Good morning," and then began his song again : —

"Men defile us and kill us while loving us,
We hang to the earth by a thread ;
This thread is our root, that is to say, our life,
But we raise on high our arms towards heaven."

"Ah, you accursed sorcerer ! you are making game of me, I believe," roared Gryphus.

Cornelius continued : —

"For heaven is our home,
Our true home, as from thence comes our soul,
As thither our soul returns, —
Our soul, that is to say, our perfume."

Gryphus went up to the prisoner and said, —

"But you don't see that I have taken means to get you under, and to force you to confess your crimes."

"Are you mad, my dear Master Gryphus ?" asked Cornelius.

And, as he now for the first time observed the frenzied features, the flashing eyes, and foaming mouth of the old jailer, he said, —

"Bless the man, he is more than mad, he is furious."

Gryphus flourished his stick above his head, but Van

Baerle moved not, and remained standing with his arms akimbo.

"It seems your intention to threaten me, Master Gryphus."

"Yes, indeed, I threaten you," cried the jailer.

"And with what?"

"First of all, look at what I have in my hand."

"I think that's a stick," said Cornelius calmly, "but I don't suppose you will threaten me with that."

"Oh, you don't suppose! why not?"

"Because any jailer who strikes a prisoner is liable to two penalties,—the first laid down in Article 9 of the regulations at Loewestein:—

"Any jailer, inspector, or turnkey who lays hands upon any prisoner of State will be dismissed."

"Yes, who lays hands," said Gryphus, mad with rage, "but there is not a word about a stick in the regulation."

"And the second," continued Cornelius, "which is not written in the regulation, but which is to be found elsewhere:—

"Whosoever takes up the stick will be thrashed by the stick."

Gryphus, growing more and more exasperated by the calm and sententious tone of Cornelius, brandished his cudgel, but at the moment when he raised it Cornelius rushed at him, snatched it from his hands, and put it under his own arm.

Gryphus fairly bellowed with rage.

"Hush, hush, my good man," said Cornelius, "don't do anything to lose your place."

"Ah, you sorcerer! I'll pinch you worse," roared Gryphus.

"I wish you may."

"Don't you see my hand is empty?"

"Yes, I see it, and I am glad of it."

"You know that it is not generally so when I come up stairs in the morning."

"It's true, you generally bring me the worst soup, and

the most miserable rations one can imagine. But that's not a punishment to me; I eat only bread, and the worse the bread is to your taste, the better it is to mine."

"How so?"

"Oh, it's a very simple thing."

"Well, tell it me," said Gryphus.

"Very willingly. I know that in giving me bad bread you think you do me harm."

"Certainly; I don't give it you to please you, you brigand."

"Well, then, I, who am a sorcerer, as you know, change your bad into excellent bread, which I relish more than the best cake; and then I have the double pleasure of eating something that gratifies my palate, and of doing something that puts you in a rage."

Gryphus answered with a growl.

"Oh! you confess, then, that you are a sorcerer."

"Indeed, I am one. I don't say it before all the world, because they might burn me for it; but as we are alone, I don't mind telling you."

"Well, well, well," answered Gryphus. "But if a sorcerer can change black bread into white, won't he die of hunger if he has no bread at all?"

"What's that?" said Cornelius.

"Consequently I shall not bring you any bread at all, and we shall see how it will be after eight days."

Cornelius grew pale.

"And," continued Gryphus, "we'll begin this very day. As you are such a clever sorcerer, why, you had better change the furniture of your room into bread; as to myself, I shall pocket the eighteen sous which are paid to me for your board."

"But that's murder," cried Cornelius, carried away by the first impulse of the very natural terror with which this horrible mode of death inspired him.

"Well," Gryphus went on, in his jeering way, "as you are a sorcerer, you will live, notwithstanding."

Cornelius put on a smiling face again, and said, —

“Have you not seen me make the pigeons come here from Dort?”

“Well?” said Gryphus.

“Well, a pigeon is a very dainty morsel, and a man who eats one every day would not starve, I think.”

“And how about the fire?” said Gryphus.

“Fire! but you know that I’m in league with the devil. Do you think the devil will leave me without fire? Why, fire is his proper element.”

“A man, however healthy his appetite may be, would not eat a pigeon every day. Wagers have been laid to do so, and those who made them gave them up.”

“Well, but when I am tired of pigeons, I shall make the fish of the Waal and of the Meuse come up to me.”

Gryphus opened his large eyes, quite bewildered.

“I am rather fond of fish,” continued Cornelius; “you never let me have any. Well, I shall turn your starving me to advantage, and regale myself with fish.”

Gryphus nearly fainted with anger and with fright, but he soon rallied, and said, putting his hand in his pocket, —

“Well, as you force me to it,” and with these words he drew forth a clasp-knife and opened it.

“Halloa! a knife?” said Cornelius, preparing to defend himself with his stick.

CHAPTER XXIX.

IN WHICH VAN BAERLE, BEFORE LEAVING LOEWESTEIN,
SETTLES ACCOUNTS WITH GRYPHUS.

THE two remained silent for some minutes, Gryphus on the offensive, and Van Baerle on the defensive.

Then, as the situation might be prolonged to an indefinite length, Cornelius, anxious to know something more of the causes which had so fiercely exasperated his jailer, spoke first by putting the question,—

“Well, what do you want, after all?”

“I’ll tell you what I want,” answered Gryphus; “I want you to restore to me my daughter Rosa.”

“Your daughter?” cried Van Baerle.

“Yes, my daughter Rosa, whom you have taken from me by your devilish magic. Now, will you tell me where she is?”

And the attitude of Gryphus became more and more threatening.

“Rosa is not at Loewestein?” cried Cornelius.

“You know well she is not. Once more, will you restore her to me?”

“I see,” said Cornelius, “this is a trap you are laying for me.”

“Now, for the last time, will you tell me where my daughter is?”

“Guess it, you rogue, if you don’t know it.”

“Only wait, only wait,” growled Gryphus, white with rage, and with quivering lips, as his brain began to turn. “Ah, you will not tell me anything? Well, I’ll unlock your teeth!”

He advanced a step towards Cornelius, and said, showing him the weapon which he held in his hands, —

“Do you see this knife? Well, I have killed more than fifty black cocks with it, and I vow I’ll kill their master, the devil, as well as them.”

“But, you blockhead,” said Cornelius, “will you really kill me?”

“I shall open your heart to see in it the place where you hide my daughter.”

Saying this, Gryphus in his frenzy rushed towards Cornelius, who had barely time to retreat behind his table to avoid the first thrust; but as Gryphus continued, with horrid threats, to brandish his huge knife, and as, although out of the reach of his weapon, yet, as long as it remained in the madman’s hand, the ruffian might fling it at him, Cornelius lost no time, and availing himself of the stick, which he held tight under his arm, dealt the jailer a vigorous blow on the wrist of that hand which held the knife.

The knife fell to the ground, and Cornelius put his foot on it.

Then, as Gryphus seemed bent upon engaging in a struggle which the pain in his wrist, and shame for having allowed himself to be disarmed, would have made desperate, Cornelius took a decisive step, belaboring his jailer with the most heroic self-possession, and selecting the exact spot for every blow of the terrible cudgel.

It was not long before Gryphus begged for mercy. But before begging for mercy, he had lustily roared for help, and his cries had roused all the functionaries of the prison. Two turnkeys, an inspector, and three or four guards, made their appearance all at once, and found Cornelius still using the stick, with the knife under his foot.

At the sight of these witnesses, who could not know all the circumstances which had provoked and might justify his offence, Cornelius felt that he was irretrievably lost.

In fact, appearances were sadly against him.

In one moment Cornelius was disarmed, and Gryphus

raised and supported; and, bellowing with rage and pain, he was able to count on his back and shoulders the bruises which were beginning to swell like the hills dotting the slopes of a mountain ridge.

A protocol of the violence practised by the prisoner against his jailer was immediately drawn up, and as it was made on the depositions of Gryphus, it certainly could not be said to be too tame; the prisoner being charged with neither more nor less than with an attempt to murder, for a long time premeditated, with open rebellion.

Whilst the charge was made out against Cornelius, Gryphus, whose presence was no longer necessary after having made his depositions, was taken down by his turnkeys to his lodge, groaning and covered with bruises.

During this time, the guards who had seized Cornelius busied themselves in charitably informing their prisoner of the usages and customs of Loewestein, which however he knew as well as they did. The regulations had been read to him at the moment of his entering the prison, and certain articles in them remained fixed in his memory.

Among other things they told him that this regulation had been carried out to its full extent in the case of a prisoner named Mathias, who in 1668, that is to say, five years before, had committed a much less violent act of rebellion than that of which Cornelius was guilty. He had found his soup too hot, and thrown it at the head of the chief turnkey, who in consequence of this ablution had been put to the inconvenience of having his skin come off as he wiped his face.

Mathias was taken within twelve hours from his cell, then led to the jailer's lodge, where he was registered as leaving Loewestein, then taken to the Esplanade, from which there is a very fine prospect over a wide expanse of country. There they fettered his hands, bandaged his eyes, and let him say his prayers.

Hereupon he was invited to go down on his knees, and the guards of Loewestein, twelve in number, at a sign from

a sergeant, very cleverly lodged a musket-ball each in his body.

In consequence of this proceeding, Mathias incontinently did then and there die.

Cornelius listened with the greatest attention to this delightful recital, and then said, —

“Ah! ah! within twelve hours, you say?”

“Yes, the twelfth hour had not even struck, if I remember right,” said the guard who had told him the story.

“Thank you,” said Cornelius.

The guard still had the smile on his face with which he accompanied and as it were accentuated his tale, when footsteps and a jingling of spurs were heard ascending the stair-case.

The guards fell back to allow an officer to pass, who entered the cell of Cornelius at the moment when the clerk of Loewestein was still making out his report.

“Is this No. 11?” he asked.

“Yes, Captain,” answered a non-commissioned officer.

“Then this is the cell of the prisoner Cornelius van Baerle?”

“Exactly, Captain.”

“Where is the prisoner?”

“Here I am, sir,” answered Cornelius, growing rather pale, notwithstanding all his courage.

“You are Dr. Cornelius van Baerle?” asked he, this time addressing the prisoner himself.

“Yes, sir.”

“Then follow me.”

“Oh! oh!” said Cornelius, whose heart felt oppressed by the first dread of death. “What quick work they make here in the fortress of Loewestein. And the rascal talked to me of twelve hours!”

“Ah! what did I tell you?” whispered the communicative guard in the ear of the culprit.

“A lie.”

“How so?”

"You promised me twelve hours."

"Ah, yes, but here comes to you an aide-de-camp of his Highness, even one of his most intimate companions, Van Deken. Zounds! they did not grant such an honor to poor Mathias."

"Come, come!" said Cornelius, drawing a long breath. "Come, I'll show to these people that an honest burgher, godson of Cornelius De Witt, can without flinching receive as many musket-balls as that Mathias."

Saying this, he passed proudly before the clerk, who being interrupted in his work, ventured to say to the officer, —

"But, Captain Van Deken, the protocol is not yet finished."

"It is not worth while finishing it," answered the officer.

"All right," replied the clerk, philosophically putting up his paper and pen into a greasy and well-worn writing-case.

"It was written," thought poor Cornelius, "that I should not in this world give my name either to a child, to a flower, or to a book, — the three things by which a man's memory is perpetuated."

Repressing his melancholy thoughts, he followed the officer with a resolute heart, and carrying his head erect.

Cornelius counted the steps which led to the Esplanade, regretting that he had not asked the guard how many there were of them, which the man, in his official complaisance, would not have failed to tell him.

What the poor prisoner was most afraid of during this walk, which he considered as leading him to the end of the journey of life, was to see Gryphus and not to see Rosa. What savage satisfaction would glisten in the eyes of the father, and what sorrow dim those of the daughter!

How Gryphus would glory in his punishment! Punishment? Rather, savage vengeance for an eminently right-

eous deed, which Cornelius had the satisfaction of having performed as a bounden duty.

But Rosa, poor girl! must he die without a glimpse of her, without an opportunity to give her one last kiss, or even to say one last word of farewell?

And worst of all, must he die without any intelligence of the black tulip, and regain his consciousness in heaven with no idea in what direction he should look to find it?

In truth, to restrain his tears at such a crisis the poor wretch's heart must have been encased in more of the *aes triplex* — "the triple brass" — than Horace bestows upon the sailor who first visited the terrifying Acroceranunian shoals.

In vain did Cornelius look to the right and to the left; he saw no sign either of Rosa or Gryphus.

On reaching the Esplanade, he bravely looked about for the guards who were to be his executioners, and in reality saw a dozen soldiers assembled. But they were not standing in line, or carrying muskets, but talking together so gayly that Cornelius felt almost shocked.

All at once, Gryphus, limping, staggering, and supporting himself on a crooked stick, came forth from the jailer's lodge; his old eyes, gray as those of a cat, were lit up by a gleam in which all his hatred was concentrated. He then began to pour forth such a torrent of disgusting imprecations against Cornelius, that the latter, addressing the officer, said, —

"I do not think it very becoming, sir, that I should be thus insulted by this man, especially at a moment like this."

"Well! hear me," said the officer, laughing, "it is quite natural that this worthy fellow should bear you a grudge, — you seem to have given it him very soundly."

"But, sir, it was only in self-defence."

"Never mind," said the Captain, shrugging his shoulders like a true philosopher, "let him talk; what does it matter to you now?"

The cold sweat stood on the brow of Cornelius at this answer, which he looked upon somewhat in the light of brutal irony, especially as coming from an officer of whom he had heard it said that he was attached to the person of the Prince.

The unfortunate tulip-fancier then felt that he had no more resources, and no more friends, and resigned himself to his fate.

"God's will be done," he muttered, bowing his head; then, turning towards the officer, who seemed complacently to wait until he had finished his meditations, he asked, —

"Please, sir, tell me now, where am I to go?"

The officer pointed to a carriage drawn by four horses, which reminded him very strongly of that which, under similar circumstances, had before attracted his attention at the Buytenhof.

"Enter," said the officer.

"Ah!" muttered Cornelius to himself, "it seems they are not going to treat me to the honours of the Esplanade."

He uttered these words loud enough for the chatty guard, who was at his heels, to overhear him.

That kind soul very likely thought it his duty to give Cornelius some new information; for, approaching the door of the carriage, whilst the officer, with one foot on the step, was still giving some orders, he whispered to Van Baerle, —

"Condemned prisoners have sometimes been taken to their own town to be made an example of, and have then been executed before the door of their own house. It's all according to circumstances."

Cornelius thanked him by signs, and then said to himself, —

"Well, here is a fellow who never misses giving consolation whenever an opportunity presents itself. In truth, my friend, I'm very much obliged to you. Good-by."

The carriage drove away.

"Ah! you villain, you brigand," roared Gryphus, clinch-

ing his fists at the victim who was escaping from his clutches: "is it not a shame that this fellow gets off without having restored my daughter to me?"

"If they take me to Dort," thought Cornelius, "I shall see, in passing my house, whether my poor borders have been much spoiled."

CHAPTER XXX.

WHEREIN THE READER BEGINS TO GUESS THE KIND OF
EXECUTION THAT WAS AWAITING VAN BAERLE.

THE carriage rolled on during the whole day ; it passed on the right of Dort, went through Rotterdam, and reached Delft. At five o'clock in the evening, at least twenty leagues had been travelled.

Cornelius addressed some questions to the officer, who was at the same time his guard and his companion ; but, cautious as were his inquiries, he had the disappointment of receiving no answer.

Cornelius regretted that he had no longer by his side the chatty soldier, who would talk without being questioned.

That obliging person would undoubtedly have given him as pleasant details and exact explanations concerning this third strange part of his adventures as he had done concerning the first two.

The travellers passed the night in the carriage. On the following morning at dawn Cornelius found himself beyond Leyden, having the North Sea on his left, and the Zuyder Zee on his right.

Three hours after, he entered Haarlem.

Cornelius was not aware of what had passed at Haarlem and we shall leave him in ignorance of it until the course of events enlighten him.

But the reader has a right to know all about it even before our hero, and therefore we shall not make him wait.

We have seen that Rosa and the tulip, like two orphan sisters, had been left by Prince William of Orange at the house of the President van Systens.

Rosa did not hear again from the Stadtholder until the evening of that day on which she had seen him face to face.

Toward evening, an officer called at Van System's house. He came from his Highness, with a request for Rosa to appear at the Town Hall.

There, in the large Council Room into which she was ushered, she found the Prince writing.

He was alone, with a large Frisian greyhound at his feet, which looked at him with a steady glance, as if the faithful animal were wishing to do what no man could do, — read the thoughts of his master in his face.

William continued his writing for a moment; then, raising his eyes, and seeing Rosa standing near the door, he said, without laying down his pen, —

“Come here, my child.”

Rosa advanced a few steps towards the table.

“Sit down,” he said.

Rosa obeyed, for the Prince was fixing his eyes upon her; but he had scarcely turned them again to his paper when she bashfully retired to the door.

The Prince finished his letter.

During this time, the greyhound went up to Rosa, surveyed her, and began to caress her.

“Ah, ah!” said William to his dog, “it’s easy to see that she is a countrywoman of yours, and that you recognise her.”

Then, turning towards Rosa, and fixing on her his scrutinising, and at the same time impenetrable glance, he said, —

“Now, my child.”

The Prince was scarcely twenty-three, and Rosa eighteen or twenty. He might therefore perhaps better have said, My sister.

“My child,” he said, with that strangely commanding accent which chilled all those who approached him, “we are alone; let us speak together.”

Rosa began to tremble, and yet there was nothing but kindness in the expression of the Prince's face.

"Monseigneur," she stammered.

"You have a father at Loewestein?"

"Yes, your Highness."

"You do not love him?"

"I do not; at least, not as a daughter ought to do, Monseigneur."

"It is not right not to love one's father, but it is right not to tell a falsehood."

Rosa cast her eyes to the ground.

"What is the reason of your not loving your father?"

"He is wicked."

"In what way does he show his wickedness?"

"He ill-treats the prisoners."

"All of them?"

"All."

"But don't you bear him a grudge for ill-treating some one in particular?"

"My father ill-treats in particular Mynheer van Baerle, who —"

"Who is your lover?"

Rosa started back a step.

"Whom I love, Monseigneur," she answered proudly.

"Since when?" asked the Prince.

"Since the day when I first saw him."

"And when was that?"

"The day after that on which the Grand Pensionary John and his brother Cornelius met with such an awful death."

The Prince compressed his lips, and knit his brow, and his eyelids dropped so as to hide his eyes for an instant. After a momentary silence, he resumed the conversation.

"But to what can it lead to love a man who is doomed to live and die in prison?"

"It will lead, if he lives and dies in prison, to my aiding him in life and in death."

"And would you accept the lot of being the wife of a prisoner?"

"As the wife of Mynheer van Baerle, I should, under any circumstances, be the proudest and happiest woman in the world; but —"

"But what?"

"I dare not say, Monseigneur."

"There is something like hope in your tone; what do you hope?"

She raised her moist and beautiful eyes, and looked at William with a glance full of meaning, which was calculated to stir up in the recesses of his heart the clemency which was slumbering there.

"Ah! I understand you," he said.

Rosa, with a smile, clasped her hands.

"You hope in me?" said the Prince.

"Yes, Monseigneur."

"Umph!"

The Prince sealed the letter which he had just written, and summoned one of his officers, to whom he said, —

"Captain van Deken, carry this despatch to Loewestein; you will read the orders which I give to the Governor, and execute them as far as they regard you."

The officer bowed, and a few minutes afterwards the gallop of a horse was heard resounding in the vaulted archway.

"My child," continued the Prince, "the feast of the tulip will be on Sunday next, that is to say, the day after tomorrow. Make yourself smart with these five hundred guilders, as I wish that day to be a great day for you."

"How does your Highness wish me to be dressed?" faltered Rosa.

"Take the costume of a Frisian bride," said William; "it will suit you very well indeed."

CHAPTER XXXI

HAARLEM.

HAARLEM, whither, three days ago, we conducted our gentle reader, and whither we request him to follow us once more in the footsteps of the prisoner, is a pleasant city, which justly prides itself on being one of the most shady in all the Netherlands.

While other towns boast of the magnificence of their arsenals and dock-yards, and the splendor of their shops and markets, Haarlem's claims to fame rest upon her superiority to all other provincial cities in the number and beauty of her spreading elms, graceful poplars, and, more than all, upon her pleasant walks, shaded by the lovely arches of magnificent oaks, lindens, and chestnuts.

Haarlem, — just as her neighbour, Leyden, became the centre of science, and her queen, Amsterdam, that of commerce, — Haarlem preferred to be the agricultural, or, more strictly speaking, the horticultural metropolis.

In fact, girt about as she was, breezy and exposed to the sun's hot rays, she seemed to offer to gardeners so many more guaranties of success than other places, with their heavy sea air, and their scorching heat.

On this account all the serene souls who loved the earth and its fruits had gradually gathered together at Haarlem, just as all the nervous, uneasy spirits, whose ambition was for travel and commerce, had settled in Rotterdam and Amsterdam, and all the politicians and selfish worldlings at the Hague.

We have observed that Leyden overflowed with scholars. In like manner Haarlem was devoted to the gentle

pursuits of peace, — to music and painting, orchards and avenues, groves and parks. Haarlem went wild about flowers, and tulips received their full share of worship.

Haarlem offered prizes for tulip-growing; and this fact brings us in the most natural manner to that celebration which the city intended to hold on May 15th, 1673, in honour of the great black tulip, immaculate and perfect, which should gain for its discoverer one hundred thousand guilders!

Haarlem, having placed on exhibition its favorite, having advertised its love of flowers in general and of tulips in particular at a period when the souls of men were filled with war and sedition, — Haarlem, having enjoyed the exquisite pleasure of admiring the very purest ideal of tulips in full bloom, — Haarlem, this tiny town, full of trees and of sunshine, of light and shade, had determined that the ceremony of bestowing the prize should be a fête which should live for ever in the memory of men.

So much the more reason was there, too, in her determination, in that Holland is the home of fêtes; never did sluggish natures manifest more eager energy of the singing and dancing sort than those of the good republicans of the Seven Provinces when amusement was the order of the day.

Study the pictures of the two Teniers.

It is certain that sluggish folk are of all men the most earnest in tiring themselves, not when they are at work, but at play.

Thus Haarlem was thrice given over to rejoicing, for a three-fold celebration was to take place.

In the first place, the black tulip had been produced; secondly, the Prince William of Orange, as a true Hollander, had promised to be present at the ceremony of its inauguration; and, thirdly, it was a point of honour with the States to show to the French, at the conclusion of such a disastrous war as that of 1672, that the flooring of the Batavian Republic was solid enough for its people to dance

on it, with the accompaniment of the cannon of their fleets.

The Horticultural Society of Haarlem had shown itself worthy of its fame by giving a hundred thousand guilders for the bulb of a tulip. The town, which did not wish to be outdone, voted a like sum, which was placed in the hands of that notable body to solemnise the auspicious event.

And indeed on the Sunday fixed for this ceremony there was such a stir among the people, and such an enthusiasm among the townsfolk, that even a Frenchman, who laughs at everything at all times, could not have helped admiring the character of those honest Hollanders, who were equally ready to spend their money for the construction of a man-of-war—that is to say, for the support of national honour—as they were to reward the growth of a new flower, destined to bloom for one day, and to serve during that day to divert the ladies, the learned, and the curious.

At the head of the notables and of the Horticultural Committee shone Mynheer van Systems, dressed in his richest habiliments.

The worthy man had done his best to imitate his favourite flower in the sombre and stern elegance of his garments; and we are bound to record, to his honour, that he had perfectly succeeded in his object.

Dark crimson velvet, dark purple silk, and jet-black cloth, with linen of dazzling whiteness, composed the festive dress of the President, who marched at the head of his Committee carrying an enormous nosegay, like that which a hundred and twenty-one years later, Monsieur de Robespierre displayed at the festival of “The Supreme Being.”

There was, however, a little difference between the two; very different from the French tribune, whose heart was so full of hatred and ambitious vindictiveness, was the honest President, who carried in his bosom a heart as innocent as the flowers which he held in his hand.

Behind the Committee, who were as gay as a meadow, and as fragrant as a garden in spring, marched the learned

societies of the town, the magistrates, the military, the nobles and the boors.

The people, even among the respected republicans of the Seven Provinces, had no place assigned to them in the procession; they merely lined the streets.

This is the place for the multitude, which, with true philosophic spirit, waits until the triumphal pageants have passed, to know what to say of them, and sometimes also to know what to do.

This time, however, there was no question either of the triumph of Pompey or of Cæsar; neither of the defeat of Mithridates, nor of the conquest of Gaul. The procession was as placid as the passing of a flock of lambs, and as inoffensive as a flight of birds sweeping through the air.

Haarlem had no other triumphers, except its gardeners. Worshipping flowers, Haarlem idolised the florist.

In the centre of this pacific and fragrant cortege the black tulip was seen, carried on a litter, which was covered with white velvet and fringed with gold.

The handles of the litter were supported by four men, who were from time to time relieved by fresh relays,—even as the bearers of Mother Cybele used to take turn and turn about at Rome in the ancient days, when she was brought from Etruria to the Eternal City, amid the blare of trumpets and the worship of a whole nation.

This public exhibition of the tulip was an act of adoration rendered by an entire nation, unlettered and unrefined, to the refinement and culture of its illustrious and devout leaders, whose blood had stained the foul pavement of the Buytenhof, reserving the right at a future day to inscribe the names of its victims upon the highest stone of the Dutch Pantheon.

It was arranged that the Prince Stadtholder himself should give the prize of a hundred thousand guilders, which interested the people at large, and it was thought that perhaps he would make a speech which interested more particularly his friends and enemies.

For in the most insignificant words of men of political importance their friends and their opponents always endeavour to detect, and hence think they can interpret, something of their true thoughts.

As if your true politician's hat were not a bushel under which he always hides his light!

At length the great and long-expected day—May 15, 1673—arrived; and all Haarlem, swelled by her neighbours, was gathered in the beautiful tree-lined streets, determined on this occasion not to waste its applause upon military heroes, or those who had won notable victories in the field of science, but to reserve their applause for those who had overcome Nature, and had forced the inexhaustible mother to be delivered of what had theretofore been regarded as impossible of production,—a completely black tulip.

Nothing, however, is more fickle than such a resolution of the people. When a crowd is once in the humour to cheer, it is just the same as when it begins to hiss. It never knows when to stop.

It therefore, in the first place, cheered Van Systens and his nosegay, then the corporation, then followed a cheer for the people; and, at last, and for once with great justice, there was one for the excellent music with which the gentlemen of the town councils generously treated the assemblage at every halt.

Every eye was looking eagerly for the heroine of the festival,—that is to say, the black tulip,—and for its hero in the person of the one who had grown it.

In case this hero should make his appearance after the address we have seen worthy Van Systens at work on so conscientiously, he would not fail to make as much of a sensation as the Stadtholder himself.

But the interest of the day's proceedings for us is centred neither in the learned discourse of our friend Van Systens, however eloquent it might be; nor in the young dandies, resplendent in their Sunday clothes, and munching their heavy cakes; nor in the poor young peasants, gnawing

smoked eels as if they were sticks of vanilla sweetmeat; neither is our interest in the lovely Dutch girls, with red cheeks and ivory bosoms; nor in the fat, round mynheers, who had never left their homes before; nor in the sallow, thin travellers from Ceylon or Java; nor in the thirsty crowds, who quenched their thirst with pickled cucumbers;—no, so far as we are concerned, the real interest of the situation, the fascinating, dramatic interest, is not to be found here.

Our interest is in a smiling, sparkling face to be seen amid the members of the Horticultural Committee; in the person with a flower in his belt, combed and brushed, and all clad in scarlet,—a colour which makes his black hair and yellow skin stand out in violent contrast.

This hero, radiant with rapturous joy, who had the distinguished honour of making the people forget the speech of Van Systems, and even the presence of the Stadtholder, was Isaac Boxtel, who saw, carried on his right before him, the black tulip, his pretended daughter; and on his left, in a large purse, the hundred thousand guilders in glittering gold pieces, towards which he was constantly squinting, fearful of losing sight of them for one moment.

Now and then Boxtel quickened his step to rub elbows for a moment with Van Systems. He borrowed a little importance from everybody to make a kind of false importance for himself, as he had stolen Rosa's tulip to effect his own glory, and thereby make his fortune.

Another quarter of an hour and the Prince will arrive, and the procession will halt for the last time; after the tulip is placed on its throne, the Prince, yielding precedence to this rival for the popular adoration, will take a magnificently emblazoned parchment, on which is written the name of the grower; and his Highness, in a loud and audible tone, will proclaim him to be the discoverer of a wonder; that Holland, by the instrumentality of him, Boxtel, has forced Nature to produce a black flower, which shall henceforth be called *Tulipa nigra Buxtellea*.

From time to time, however, Boxtel withdrew his eyes for a moment from the tulip and the purse, timidly looking among the crowd; for more than anything he dreaded to descry there the pale face of the pretty Frisian girl.

She would have been a spectre spoiling the joy of the festival for him, just as Banquo's ghost did that of Macbeth.

And yet, if the truth must be told, this wretch, who had stolen what was the boast of man, and the dowry of a woman, did not consider himself as a thief. He had so intently watched this tulip, followed it so eagerly from the drawer in Cornelius's dry-room to the scaffold of the Buytenhof, and from the scaffold to the fortress of Loewestein; he had seen it bud and grow in Rosa's window, and so often warmed the air round it with his breath, that he felt as if no one had a better right to call himself its producer than he had; and any one who would now take the black tulip from him would have appeared to him as a thief.

Yet he did not perceive Rosa; his joy therefore was not spoiled.

In the centre of a circle of magnificent trees, which were decorated with garlands and inscriptions, the procession halted, amidst the sounds of lively music; and the young damsels of Haarlem made their appearance to escort the tulip to the raised seat which it was to occupy on the platform, by the side of the gilded chair of his Highness the Stadtholder.

And the proud tulip, raised on its pedestal, soon over-looked the assembled crowd of people, who clapped their hands, and made the old town of Haarlem re-echo with their tremendous cheers.

CHAPTER XXXII.

A LAST REQUEST.

At this solemn moment, and whilst the cheers still resounded, a carriage was driving along the road on the outskirts of the green on which the scene occurred ; it pursued its way slowly, on account of the flocks of children who were pushed out of the avenue by the crowd of men and women.

This carriage, covered with dust, and creaking on its axles, the result of a long journey, enclosed the unfortunate Van Baerle, who was just beginning to get a glimpse through the open window of the scene which we have tried — with poor success, no doubt — to present to the eyes of the reader.

The crowd and the noise and the display of artificial and natural magnificence were as dazzling to the prisoner as a ray of light flashing suddenly into his dungeon.

Notwithstanding the little readiness which his companion had shown in answering his questions concerning his fate, he ventured once more to ask the meaning of all this bustle, which at first sight seemed to be utterly disconnected with his own affairs.

“What is all this, pray, Mynheer Lieutenant ?” he asked of his conductor.

“As you may see, sir,” replied the officer, “it is a feast.”

“Ah, a feast,” said Cornelius, in the sad tone of indifference of a man to whom no joy remains in this world.

Then, after some moments’ silence, during which the carriage had proceeded a few yards, he asked once more, —

"The feast of the patron saint of Haarlem? as I see so many flowers."

"It is, indeed, a feast in which flowers play a principal part."

"Oh, the sweet scents! oh, the beautiful colours!" cried Cornelius.

"Stop, that the gentleman may see," said the officer, with that frank kindness which is peculiar to military men, to the soldier who was acting as postilion.

"Oh, thank you, Sir, for your kindness," replied Van Baerle, in a melancholy tone; "the joy of others pains me; please spare me this pang."

"Just as you wish. Drive on! I ordered the driver to stop because I thought it would please you, as you are said to love flowers, and especially that the feast of which is celebrated to-day."

"And what flower is that?"

"The tulip."

"The tulip!" cried Van Baerle, "is to-day the feast of tulips?"

"Yes, sir; but as this spectacle displeases you, let us drive on."

The officer was about to give the order to proceed, but Cornelius stopped him, a painful thought having struck him. He asked, with faltering voice, —

"Is the prize given to-day, sir?"

"Yes, the prize for the black tulip."

Cornelius's cheek flushed, his whole frame trembled, and the cold sweat stood on his brow.

"Alas! sir," he said, "all these good people will be as unfortunate as myself, for they will not see the solemnity which they have come to witness, or at least they will see it incompletely."

"What is it you mean to say?"

"I mean to say," replied Cornelius, throwing himself back in the carriage, "that the black tulip will not be found, except by one whom I know."

"In this case," said the officer, "the person whom you know has found it, for the thing which the whole of Haarlem is looking at at this moment is neither more nor less than the black tulip."

"The black tulip!" replied Van Baerle, thrusting half his body out of the carriage window. "Where is it? where is it?"

"Down there on the throne, — don't you see?"

"I do see it."

"Come along, sir," said the officer. "Now we must drive off."

"Oh, have pity, have mercy, sir!" said Van Baerle, "don't take me away! Let me look once more! Is what I see down there the black tulip? Quite black? Is it possible? Oh, sir, have you seen it? It must have specks, it must be imperfect, it must only be dyed black. Ah! if I were there, I should see it at once. Let me alight, let me see it close, I beg of you."

"Are you mad, Sir? How could I allow such a thing?"

"I implore you."

"But you forget that you are a prisoner."

"It is true I am a prisoner, but I am a man of honour, and I promise you on my word that I will not run away, I will not attempt to escape, — only let me see the flower."

"But my orders, Sir, my orders." And the officer again made the driver a sign to proceed.

Cornelius stopped him once more.

"Oh, be forbearing, be generous! my whole life depends upon your pity. Alas! perhaps it will not be much longer. You don't know, sir, what I suffer. You don't know the struggle going on in my heart and mind. For after all," Cornelius cried in despair, "if this were my tulip, if it were the one which has been stolen from Rosa! Oh, I must alight, sir! I must see the flower! You may kill me afterwards if you like, but I will see it, I must see it."

"Be quiet, unfortunate man, and come quickly back into

the carriage, for here is the escort of his Highness the Stadtholder, and if the Prince observed any disturbance, or heard any noise, it would be ruin to me, as well as to you."

Van Baerle, more afraid for his companion than himself, threw himself back into the carriage, but he could only keep quiet for half a minute, and the first twenty horsemen had scarcely passed when he again leaned out of the carriage window, gesticulating imploringly towards the Stadtholder at the very moment when he passed.

William, impassible and quiet as usual, was proceeding to the green to fulfil his duty as chairman. He held in his hand the roll of parchment, which, on this festive day, had become his baton.

Seeing the man gesticulate with imploring mien, and perhaps also recognising the officer who accompanied him, his Highness ordered his carriage to stop.

In an instant his snorting steeds stood still, at a distance of about six yards from the carriage in which Van Baerle was caged.

"What is this?" the Prince asked the officer, who at the first order of the Stadtholder had jumped out of the carriage, and was respectfully approaching him.

"Monseigneur," he cried, "this is the prisoner of state whom I have fetched from Loewestein, and whom I have brought to Haarlem according to your Highness's command."

"What does he want?"

"He entreats for permission to stop here for a minute."

"To see the black tulip, Monseigneur," said Van Baerle, clasping his hands, "and when I have seen it, when I have seen what I desire to know, I am quite ready to die, if die I must; but in dying I shall bless your Highness's mercy for having allowed me to witness the glorification of my work."

It was, indeed, a curious spectacle to see these two men at the windows of their several carriages: the one surrounded

by his guards, and all powerful, the other a prisoner and miserable; the one going to mount a throne, the other believing himself to be on his way to the scaffold.

William, looking with his cold glance on Cornelius, listened to his anxious and urgent request.

Then addressing himself to the officer, he said, —

“Is this person the mutinous prisoner who has attempted to kill his jailer at Loewestein?”

Cornelius heaved a sigh and hung his head. His good-tempered honest face turned pale and red at the same instant. These words of the all-powerful Prince, who by some secret messenger unavailable to other mortals had already been apprised of his crime, seemed to him to forebode not only his doom, but also the refusal of his last request.

He did not try to make a struggle, or to defend himself; and he presented to the Prince the affecting spectacle of despairing innocence, like that of a child, — a spectacle which was fully understood and felt by the great mind and the great heart of him who observed it.

“Allow the prisoner to alight, and let him see the black tulip; it is well worth being seen once.”

“Thank you, Monseigneur, thank you,” said Cornelius, nearly swooning with joy, and staggering on the steps of his carriage; had not the officer supported him, our poor friend would have made his thanks to his Highness prostrate on his knees with his forehead in the dust.

After having granted this permission, the Prince proceeded on his way over the green amidst the most enthusiastic acclamations.

He soon arrived at the platform, and the thunder of cannon shook the air.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

CONCLUSION.

VAN BAERLE, led by four guards, who pushed their way through the crowd, sidled up to the black tulip, towards which his gaze was attracted with increasing interest the nearer he approached to it.

He saw it at last, that unique flower, which he was to see once and no more. He saw it at the distance of six paces, and was delighted with its perfection and gracefulness; he saw it surrounded by young and beautiful girls, who formed, as it were, a guard of honor for this queen of excellence and purity. And yet, the more he ascertained with his own eyes the perfection of the flower, the more wretched and miserable he felt. He looked all around for some one to whom he might address only one question; but his eyes everywhere met strange faces, and the attention of all was directed towards the chair of state, on which the Stadtholder had seated himself.

William rose, casting a tranquil glance over the enthusiastic crowd, and his keen eyes rested by turns on the three extremities of a triangle formed opposite to him by three persons of very different interests and feelings.

At one of the angles, Boxel, trembling with impatience, and quite absorbed in watching the Prince, the guilders, the black tulip, and the crowd.

At the other, Cornelius, panting for breath, silent, and his attention, his eyes, his life, his heart, his love, quite concentrated on the black tulip.

And thirdly, standing on a raised step among the maidens of Haarlem, a beautiful Frisian girl, dressed in fine scarlet woollen cloth, embroidered with silver, and covered with a

lace veil, which fell in rich folds from her head-dress of gold brocade; in one word, Rosa, who, faint and with swimming eyes, was leaning on the arm of one of the officers of William.

The Prince then slowly unfolded the parchment, and said, with a calm clear voice, which, although low, made itself perfectly heard amidst the respectful silence, which all at once arrested the breath of fifty thousand spectators:—

“You know what has brought us here?”

“A prize of one hundred thousand guilders has been promised to whosoever should grow the black tulip.

“The black tulip has been grown; here it is before your eyes, coming up to all the conditions required by the programme of the Horticultural Society of Haarlem.

“The history of its production, and the name of its grower, will be inscribed in the book of honour of the city.

“Let the person approach to whom the black tulip belongs.”

In pronouncing these words, the Prince, to judge of the effect they produced, surveyed with his eagle eye the three extremities of the triangle.

He saw Boxtel rushing forward. He saw Cornelius make an involuntary movement; and lastly he saw the officer who was taking care of Rosa lead, or rather push, her forward towards him.

At the sight of Rosa, a double cry arose on the right and left of the Prince.

Boxtel, thunderstruck, and Cornelius, in joyful amazement, both exclaimed,—

“Rosa! Rosa!”

“This tulip is yours, is it not, my child?” said the Prince.

“Yes, Monseigneur,” stammered Rosa, whose striking beauty excited a general murmur of applause.

“Oh!” muttered Cornelius, “she has then belied me, when she said this flower was stolen from her. Oh! that

is why she left Loewestein. Alas! am I then forgotten, betrayed by her whom I thought my best friend on earth?"

"Oh!" sighed Boxtel, "I am lost."

"This tulip," continued the Prince, "will therefore bear the name of its producer, and figure in the catalogue under the title, *Tulipa nigra Rosa Barlaensis*, because of the name Van Baerle, which will henceforth be the name of this damsel."

And at the same time William took Rosa's hand, and placed it in that of a young man, who rushed forth, pale and beyond himself with joy, to the foot of the throne, saluting alternately the Prince and his bride; and who, with a grateful look to heaven, returned his thanks to the Giver of all this happiness.

At the same moment there fell at the feet of the President van Systems another man, struck down by a very different emotion.

Boxtel, crushed by the failure of his hopes, lay senseless on the ground.

When they raised him, and examined his pulse and his heart, he was quite dead.

This incident did not much disturb the festival, as neither the Prince nor the President seemed to mind it much.

Cornelius started back in dismay, when in the thief, in the pretended Jacob, he recognised his neighbour, Isaac Boxtel, whom, in the innocence of his heart, he had not for one instant suspected of such a wicked action.

Then, to the sound of trumpets, the procession marched back without any change in its order, except that Boxtel was now dead, and that Cornelius and Rosa were walking triumphantly side by side and hand in hand.

On their arriving at the Hôtel de Ville, the Prince, pointing with his finger to the purse with the hundred thousand guilders, said to Cornelius,—

"It is difficult to say by whom this money is gained, by you or by Rosa; for if you have found the black tulip, she has nursed it and brought it into flower. It would there-

fore be unjust to consider it as her dowry; it is the gift of the town of Haarlem to the tulip."

Cornelius wondered what the Prince was driving at. The latter continued, —

"I give to Rosa the sum of a hundred thousand guilders, which she has fairly earned, and which she can offer to you. They are the reward of her love, her courage, and her honesty. As to you, Sir — thanks to Rosa again, who has furnished the proofs of your innocence —"

And, saying these words, the Prince handed to Cornelius that fly leaf of the Bible on which was written the letter of Cornelius de Witt, and in which the third bulb had been wrapped, —

"As to you, it has come to light that you were imprisoned for a crime which you had not committed. This means, that you are not only free, but that your property will be restored to you; as the property of an innocent man cannot be confiscated. Cornelius van Baerle, you are the godson of Cornelius de Witt and the friend of his brother John. Remain worthy of the name you have received from one of them, and of the friendship you have enjoyed with the other. The two De Witts, wrongly judged and wrongly punished in a moment of popular error, were two great citizens, of whom Holland is now proud."

The Prince, after these last words, which, contrary to his custom, he pronounced with a voice full of emotion, gave his hands to the lovers to kiss, whilst they were kneeling before him.

Then heaving a sigh, he said, —

"Alas! you are very happy, who, dreaming only of what perhaps is the true glory of Holland, and forms especially her true happiness, do not attempt to acquire for her anything beyond new colors of tulips."

And, casting a glance towards that point of the compass where France lay, as if he saw new clouds gathering there, he entered his carriage and drove off.

Cornelius started on the same day for Dort with Rosa, who sent her lover's old housekeeper as a messenger to her father, to apprise him of all that had taken place.

Those who, thanks to our description, have learned the character of old Gryphus, will comprehend that it was hard for him to become reconciled to his son-in-law. He had not yet forgotten the blows which he had received in that famous encounter. To judge from the weals which he counted, their number, he said, amounted to forty-one; but at last, in order, as he declared, not to be less generous than his Highness the Stadtholder, he consented to make his peace.

Appointed to watch over the tulips, the old man made the rudest keeper of flowers in the whole of the Seven Provinces.

It was indeed a sight to see him watching the obnoxious moths and butterflies, killing slugs, and driving away the hungry bees.

As he had heard Boxtel's story, and was furious at having been the dupe of the pretended Jacob, he destroyed the sycamore behind which the envious Isaac had spied into the garden; for the plot of ground belonging to him had been bought by Cornelius, and taken into his own garden.

Rosa, growing not only in beauty, but in wisdom also, after two years of her married life, could read and write so well that she was able to undertake by herself the education of two beautiful children which she had borne in 1674 and 1675, both in May, the month of flowers.

As a matter of course, one was a boy, the other a girl, the former being called Cornelius, the other Rosa.

Van Baerle remained faithfully attached to Rosa and to his tulips. The whole of his life was devoted to the happiness of his wife and the culture of flowers, in the latter of which occupations he was so successful that a great number of his varieties found a place in the catalogue of Holland.

The two principal ornaments of his drawing-room were those two leaves from the Bible of Cornelius de Witt, in large golden frames; one of them containing the letter in which his godfather enjoined him to burn the correspondence of the Marquis de Louvois, and the other his own will, in which he bequeathed to Rosa his bulbs under condition that she should marry a young man of from twenty-six to twenty-eight years, who loved her and whom she loved, a condition which was scrupulously fulfilled, although, or rather because, Cornelius did not die.

And to ward off any envious attempts of another Isaac Boxtel, he wrote over his door the lines which Grotius had, on the day of his flight, scratched on the walls of his prison:—

“Sometimes one has suffered so much that he has the right never to be able to say, ‘I am too happy.’”

THE END.



